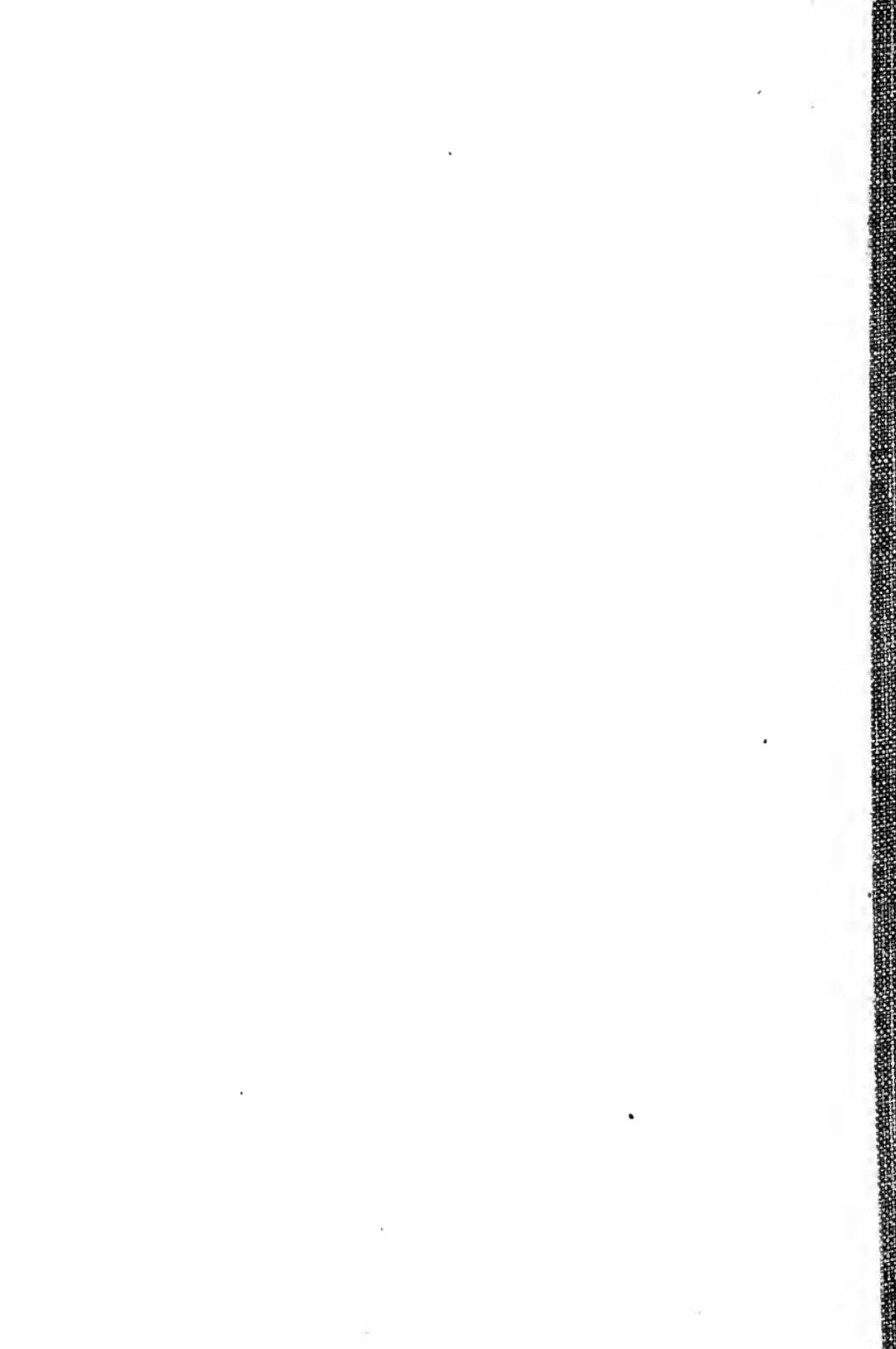


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THE POETRY OF CARMEN SYLVA.¹

BY MAURICE A. GEROTHWOHL.

[Read March 25th, 1914.]

REPUBLICS have ever been keen wooers of foreign Princes, and the Republic of Letters, through the medium of its Senates, the Academies, has shown itself in this respect a particularly eager wooer. But I doubt whether the Academies, as a rule, have done their wooing as all wooing should be done; I mean, not only with due discrimination and strength of purpose, but with fearlessness and dash. Their advances have often gone no further than to crave a colourless exchange of courtesies, the humble request and yet humbler acceptance of a distant patronage. True, a connection of this kind may lend something to the outward glamour of a learned or artistic corporation, and I would not deny the importance of its public bearing, especially when it can serve as a social hint to a pleasure-seeking and material generation, a generation heedless of all such intellectual activities as are not manifestly nor immediately convertible into specie or short bills. Such an honour, such a privilege, however, are unsubstantial; they contribute but little to the intrinsic worth or real effectiveness of the society that begs the favour. Nor is the prince who bestows the favour more likely to draw from it any appreciable gratification. At the most, its bestowal will wring from him the quiet, well-bred, but wholly formal, smile, which Queen Elizabeth of Roumania has crystallised for us with a playful if pathetic irony in her *Thoughts of a Queen*: "Strictly speaking, a prince requires nothing but eyes and ears; he does not need a mouth, except to smile." It is such aphorisms as that, or, again, as this: "A little contradiction animates conversation. This explains why Courts are so dull"; it is such aphorisms, from such a pen, which make my present task, if not an easy one, a task which is, to say the least, congenial. For they denote in their Royal author, along

(1) An address delivered on the occasion of the admittance of H.M. the Queen of Roumania as a Fellow of the Society.

with an unmitigated scorn for etiquette and insincerity, that intellectual tolerance which is, as she herself has put it, a token of the highest culture.

Now, bolder perhaps in this than some academies, or at least happier than they, in that our boldness has been promptly crowned, it is, indeed, as a colleague and co-worker, not as a queen, that we have approached Carmen Sylva; and we have wooed her, not into patronage, but into Fellowship. And since it is as a Fellow that Carmen Sylva has been willing to link her name with ours, to become, as it were, one of our body corporate, it is then, as a colleague and co-worker, that we may claim, that we should claim, to treat her, in fairness both to her work and to ourselves.

She has made literature—pure literature—the passionate devotion of her life; not through any shirking of the cares of rulership, as Roumanian history would testify, but in obedience to an early call, to a driving impulse from within, her temperament as a writer and as a poet.

For, when, her duties as a Queen fulfilled, she turns to literature, among the various forms of poetry—epic, philosophic, lyrical—or of prose—romances, novels, fairy tales—she will cultivate in either group those forms of it which owe most to the imagination and least to the topicalities of life; those from which the trappings of the more temporal sovereignty are shed according as the inner and more spiritual personality tends to clothe itself in a more independent garb.

“Talent alone raises us,” she writes, adding: “If you are to be great, your person must disappear behind your work.” Hence it is to talent alone that she would owe her place in literature; hence, also, to gratify her wish, it is to talent alone that we must look. Hence, finally, I shall omit from this survey, as foreign to my purpose, the fascinating volume made up of her childhood’s reminiscences, *From Memory’s Shrine*.

For the critic so difficult is it to hold the balance evenly as between the talents and the advantages of the author, when confronted with works of this character; so difficult is it to appraise exactly how far the public interest aroused by such a book has been due, on the one hand, to the merits of the writer, and, on the other,

to the glamour of the mighty events, to the curiosity in private anecdote and in the exalted personages who move therein. And yet, even here, in following the course of Carmen Sylva's childhood, it is more often the realm of dreams, of the imagination, that we behold or traverse in her company: "For in childhood Romance is Reality and Reality a very poor sort of Romance." And she is sorry for the children of the present day, deterred, forbidden as they are, by the cramping influences of our modern and utilitarian education, from spreading wide their wings: "Would not some of these little sceptics laugh at the idea?" she asks. Not theirs, indeed, her gift of wonder. But we know to what uses on their behalf she has put this, her priceless gift, in order to supply and remedy their wants and needs; what she has done to give back to the disinherited of childhood their forsaken paradise, the fairy Kingdom; we know the charming tales which have won for her a place between Grimm and Perrault, by the side of Andersen. The graces of all three are her possession; but to their super-sane morality, which male selfishness has sometimes marred, her womanly, her motherly instincts have added something that is indefinably more tender and more uplifting. And my excuse for not quoting from her fairy tales must be that, after all, they represent only one facet, and that, however exquisite, a minor one, in her poetical physiognomy. And if this be not true of her longer, more worldly, and more realistic novels—never *very* worldly nor *very* realistic, however, as you may readily conceive—still, I cannot linger over these. They have been for the most part written in collaboration; they do not, therefore, come within the scope of so purely personal a study. Of her shorter romances, her novelettes, a good many are moral allegories, yet another kind of fable or fairy story, but intended this time for the benefit of grown-up readers; while the most attractive are studies in racial character and local colour, all moist and fragrant with an idealism recalling George Sand's rustic sketches. Here Carmen Sylva tells mainly of the Roumanian peasant's life, which she portrays to us in all the shades of its poetical complexion, its alternations of elemental tenderness and hate, of burning toil as of glorious rest in the fields of golden

maize and the hilly groves. Time would fail me, let alone true competence, to review at length and at first hand her new versions of the ancient ditties which, together with the rich stores of its legends, her precious combination of the scholar's with the poet's gifts has restored to the Roumanian people. Moreover, as I have said before, all these prose works—novels, fairy tales, short stories—even as her verse translations, are but secondary manifestations of her poetic temperament. She deals almost invariably with an imaginary world of her own creation, or, to say the least, with a world transformed by her magician's wand, set in a poetic framework, and in a language which, while not strictly metrical, belongs primarily to poetry. Now, Carmen Sylva's art is not that of a Pierre Loti, whatever affinities of soul they may have with one another, and whatever be the charm, the loving care with which she has translated into German some of his works. Pierre Loti, like Chateaubriand before him, found in the traditional instrument of the French poet a medium incapable of expressing the elusive readings and indeterminate notations of his delicate and tormented sensuousness. So that his poetic faculty was bound to reject that medium and to fashion for himself a wholly novel and personal one, a rhythmic prose, of which the perfect flow and number are in his ear—in his alone.

Thanks to the richer variety of German metre, Carmen Sylva met with no such an obstacle as galled Pierre Loti. She had, therefore, no need to fashion a new instrument in order to express a temperament at once more normal and more varied, if less subtle and fastidious than the Frenchman's. She has sung equally in verse and prose, but in either case has sung; she is, indeed, for ever singing; I mean that it is poetry she writes at every turn and would fain write, and needs must write. That being so, it is but natural that the poet's normal medium should be better suited to her song than prose—whatever be the pitch to which she may exalt the latter. Besides, and in venturing upon this criticism I know full well that with that intellectual tolerance at which I hinted, she will condone my frankness, whenever she is writing prose she is inclined, like many, I could say most women writers, and the greatest—

George Sand to wit—she is inclined to allow too free a flow to her emotions and ideas; she does not always knit with sufficient care and closeness the texture of her sentence, the contours of her periods. She sometimes writes, I will not say loosely, but too smoothly, in too uniform a stream, one that neither dyke nor lock restrains. And that is why her gain is great from the constraint of verse, whose chastening mould imprints upon her style precision and conciseness, along with terseness and relief. Moreover, it is mainly, if not exclusively, for their verse that poets are remembered, however beautiful and sensuous their prose, and never more so than when, as here, with Carmen Sylva, they transfuse into poetic ore whatever their fancy plays upon, whether intellectual concepts, sentiments, or bare sensations.

Song is to Carmen Sylva as natural a function as it is a function of the sun to shine, of the little brook to murmur, of the broad stream to sweep majestically towards the ocean, of the earth ceaselessly to turn; and I am not alone in saying this, since it is from one of her poems, "The Bard," that I borrow these very similes. One is not born, as she, of an ancient stock which has yielded the most venturesome of knights, and bold explorers alike of virgin lands and virgin thoughts, naturalists, philosophers; and women saints or artists; of a stock which but the other day gave as their ruler to the motley and picturesque Albanian people the proud figure of a soldier-scholar; one is not born of a like stock without inheriting, or reproducing in some form or other, its roving spirit. And when it happens that this spirit is enshrined in a woman's soul, receptive and impressionable to the point of diffidence, there is no need to wonder that it should break out in the more imaginative forms of exploration. Which is, once more, what Carmen Sylva has herself explained in "Dreamland." The ideal crown for her—ideal, hence inaccessible,—would be a crown of flowers, one lighter than the dewdrops; her Royal cloak would be a cloak of cobweb; the sun would be the marshal of her court, a cloud her chariot. For it is then that her kingdom, stretching far beyond surrounding nature, would embrace the finest arts and the wildest flights of human thought. Then would her sceptre sway all hearts. But her immediate kingdom—and she knows it, and resigns herself there-

to, not in any languid mood, but with a fondness for heroic deed—is, and will remain, a kingdom of this world, and, to escape from its materiality and narrowness, it is, therefore, to surrounding nature that she will look; and when surrounding nature offers her, in turn, the waters of the iron-grey Rhine and of the turquoise Danube, here is frankly something wherewith to slake her thirst. And so we penetrate with her into the Rhenish woodland which sheltered her first marvelling essay, her childish games, games that she likens to those of “Prince Woodbird” :—

“Leaves softly touch my hair, my face
Is kissed by breezes mild;
The sun curtails his homeward race
To aid his weary child.

“Like wine my happy blood doth beat,
My laugh’s a sylvan spring;
That bubbling up so strong and sweet
Through all the wood doth ring.”¹

Now, with adolescence, she awakens to the first dreams of love, whose eternal vows, with a sentimental and Teutonic anthropomorphism, she symbolises in the entwining of the dark fir and the soft-coloured beech. When *she* is bare of leaves, *he* shelters her from the icy mountain cold. Later, when she puts on her vernal gown, ’tis he, the elder, who will grow green again at this fair and joyous sight (“Eternal Love”). But with ripening years reflection comes, and disillusion in its train. In the verses entitled “Betrayed” the poet tells us of a bitter tragedy. Into the stony heart of an ancient rock a young fir-tree had wound herself like a bride. But the seducer, young and handsome, soon appears in the shape of the West Wind, and, for the sake of her possession, engages in a mad struggle with the rock. And she, of course, will yield to the stormy blast of the more youthful passion :—

“But the faithless wind would not long be seen
By the side of his bride. Away
With a laugh he rushed through the deep ravine,
Some other hearts to slay.”

(1) Poems by Carmen Sylva; English Translation by A. H. Exner.

And, as for the poor old fool who had loved her first and best, although

“Other young firs about him press
With greetings of youthful glee;
Vainly they woo him in his distress,
He must ever a widower be.”

We have had in succession the morning hymn, the midday idyll, and the evening tragedy of Woodland. But the Sea also has her romances, her joys and sorrows, vaguer, less perceptible perhaps to the human eye because more lonesome than the forest's, hence of greater depth and fierceness. And Carmen Sylva, despite her preference for sylvan shades, has nevertheless devoted a whole book of Lieder to the great, lonely witch, whose sobbing, foaming wrath beats vainly against the haughty and unshaken rock that shelters from the billows the bird-nests and the fragrant heather-bells. For the sea hates the earth, whose richly coloured down she must needs envy, as she compares it to her own dull hue and faded gown. And the jealous sea turns to the sun for sympathy, who, friendly and unselfish, tries to lend her something of his own warmth and brilliance, as he rises in the morning, golden as the ripening corn, or as he sinks to rest at night, gory as a battlefield. 'Tis all in vain. The sea will remain cold and grey for aye. Sometimes she will forget her woes and jealousies, and then she will dance, the merry, merry sea, in her mantle of green and crown of ivory; she will dance and sing like a mad Bacchante, with outstretched arms, that rise and fall in time with her song. But more often, when she is not angered, her calm has a sweet melancholy, as, sparkling in the Italian moonlight, her waves, coaxed by the tepid breezes of the south, lap with light motion the shores moist with the fragrance of violets and orange-blossoms. Yet it is not the clear transparent waters of the Mediterranean that Carmen Sylva prefers, but those of the northern fiords and sounds, veiled by the Scandinavian haze, which has spread over them from the green hills and vales, whose giant oaks tell of chaste and secular repose. For it is in like retreats, whose mystery and discreetness the more vulgar souls cannot penetrate, that the poet's soul now longs to breathe. With her the gift

of wonder now gently yields, albeit it never disappears, to the gift of suffering, rendered more acute, but also enriched, by contact with a fuller life, and its overflowing cares, its empty hopes, its losses unretrieved. Not only has she known intense emotions of an unusual kind, the horrors of revolution and of war ; and, to no ordinary degree, the more common losses, that of her kin, of some whose years must have prepared her for their loss, and of one, whose age had seemed to promise a life-long brotherhood. Above all others, she has lost one whom she herself had borne, and on whose infant life her own was centred in an all-absorbing love and hopefulness. And it is to this desolate and tortured motherhood that we owe, if not her innate partiality for poetry, at any rate her growing practice of this art. Poetry alone could bring her, failing such easy and more selfish solace as may heal those who feel but feebly, at least the creative and austere diversion necessary to those who, feeling strongly, can never heal, but whose equally strong faith and sense of duty bid them live on despite. And with temperaments such as Carmen Sylva's it has happened before that a like grief, and a like diversion, have given to the world a new-born poet, or, if the poet was senior to the grief, then a heightening of the poet. Hers was naturally the gift of wonder. Hers will now be the gift of tears, and not of tears that burn and scar, but of tears that beautify and adorn ; of tears by distance made more sweet ; yet not bereft of poignancy ; not drained through either time or art. For her tears, even though crystallised into verse, remain true tears. They are not former tears, trickling sparsely from eyes now dried, and hoarded by the sentimental thrift of one whom the translation of his grief into terms of art has healed. Carmen Sylva does not believe in such artful and æsthetic tears. "Those who maintain that grief, when it is made the subject of song, is nearly cured, either are not poets or have not suffered." And she had developed this idea afresh in the poem entitled "Invulnerable" :—

"A singer sweet to touch men's hearts
Dry-eyed thou canst not be;
'Tis only through thy blood-red tears
Bright roses thou canst see.

Construct thy harp of yonder cross,
Whose weight is keenest pain;
Thy song ring out like yonder sword
Which cuts thy heart in twain.

Take all the broken chords of life
That lie within thy heart,
Attuned to love and longing, make
Them of thy harp a part.

Sing out the song within thy heart
In mankind's listening ears,
And of thy blood-red roses weave
A spray bedewed with tears.

Then all the sadness of the world
And all its pain are thine.
Ah! then when thou canst weep no more,
Thy song shall be divine!"

A complex and extremely interesting problem—to what extent is human sorrow assuaged by thus finding issue in a work of art? And there is another question of a more aesthetic order arising out of this, as to whether the tears shed by the poet are more beautiful when they gush forth from the hot spring of an acute and immediate emotion, or, when purified and cooled by the lull of time, they are shed anew under the stress of a deliberately provoked emotion, artistically fanned and tempered by the critical sense. There could be here, it seems to me, two theories (as for the actor's art), both tenable, the choice between which practice alone, dependent in each case on the temperament of the poet, could determine and justify. It will not, I think, be gainsaid that, if it be true in certain but rare cases, that grief, by expressing itself in a work of art, does not find its healing in the process, it is nevertheless, if in varying degrees, much softened, and the more so as it expresses itself more often. Montaigne has shown that one can deaden the fear of death itself, that greatest of all fears with most of us, by meditating ceaselessly upon it, till it assume towards us a familiar, friendly visage. So, too, with human grief; which is what Keats has understood and sung so beautifully in his invocation to sweet Sorrow. And Carmen Sylva

likewise, if in prose : "Suffering is our most faithful friend. It always returns. Often it changes its garb and even its countenance ; but we soon recognise it by its cordial and intimate embrace." But where Carmen Sylva differs, here, from many, from most poets, is that she has not drawn from her many and constant sufferings the luxury of self-commiseration, but an additional incentive to her already innate sympathy with alien ills. A childless mother, she is now become the mother of all the motherless, and from this feeling springs another set of poems, of which that entitled "Step-mother" gives us the characteristic, although not unfamiliar, note. That is why to this collection I prefer the lines headed respectively "Threatening clouds" and "Perplexed with curious fancies." In the first the nobleness of grief, grief's kindliness, its usefulness, are emphasized, since it is personal suffering that has given to the poet this clear perceptiveness of shy and speechless grief in others :—

"Should there a face forbidding seem,
Then listen to the heart;
'Tis full of pain, you did not dream.
Of hidden wounds that smart.

So, should you hear a chance remark,
'He keeps himself apart !'
And see a face that's stern and dark;
Go, listen to the heart!"

And I might recall Sully Prudhomme's treatment of the same idea in "Le Vase Brisé." But the coincidence is merely one of theme, there is no real affinity. The affinity of manner—and of soul—we find in this little introspective poem, of so subtle and poignant an analysis :—

"Perplexed with curious fancies
You lie the whole night through;
They ask with their mute reproaches,
Why need they watch with you?

These thoughts are angrily knocking
The walls of the brain behind;
Like wandering ghosts they are trying
In vain an exit to find.

Your lips and your heart you have fastened,
Have bolted and locked the door;
For ever these thoughts are captured;
They enter your heart no more."

And here we happen upon an essentially modern and contemporary note, whereon a true pessimist would have played a voluptuous "suite" of morbid variations. Not so Carmen Sylva. For her such thoughts were proof of but a passing tension, a moment's crisis. This moment passed, she becomes once more the melancholy but dutiful and healthy daughter of the Rhine, of her dear German and romantic Rhine, which she loves so that, even when he shows himself both harsh and thankless towards the dwellers on his banks, when he overflows those banks, she and they forgive him for his fitful outbursts, which but seem to them a token that he loves them not wisely but too well.

And the great stream now calm, she takes up her harp and, as she strikes its chords, marrying this time the gift of wonder to the gift of grief, the old legends of unfaithful knights and chaste manorial dames live again under the magic of her song. For German romanticism, that of the South German poets in particular, among whom Carmen Sylva is so notable a figure, is not dead and will not die—Heine would fain have killed it, and was conquered by its spell—so long as the Rhine will flow, reflecting in its swift, steely, rippling surface the sombre notches of the rocks and castle turrets that loom above, and of the luscious, lustrous vines that grow between. Romanticism in France was but a literary, isolated fashion; with us it is rather a periodical revolt against the grey tones of our climate and social life; it is individual energy, unable to assert itself by dynamic action, and translating into the static strength of poetry. In Germany romanticism is at the root of the racial tree, and will last as long as the tree. The mass of the German nation do not tire, whether of the repetition of familiar sentiments or of the resurrection of familiar haunts. Moreover, they will always be able to provide the author of a well-written Lied, who draws upon this twofold source, with fresh musical interpretations, and that is what has happened to Carmen Sylva, as you are aware. But if Germany would see and relish in her poetry that which is pecu-

liarly traditional and German, there is nothing to prevent us from preferring what is freshest and most personal. And that, I think, we shall find, in the first instance, in the collection entitled *Songs of Manual Toil*, which an American, Mr. John Eliot Bowen, has rendered with a rare felicity of style and metre.

A delightfully modern idea, thus to penetrate into the humblest lives of every trade and craft, thence to exude in sprays of song all that such lives conceal by way of trials, hopes and sorrows, disenchantments or, failing the more material joys—so scarce!—of lawful pride in labour well performed and fruitful. And other poets, to be sure, and I will name but one, John Gregory, among the living, have had a kindred thought; but springing, as it springs here, from a royal fount of sympathy, that thought partakes of a peculiar zest.

Besides, Carmen Sylva's musical "suite" and picture gallery—for there is no comprehensive term wherewith to designate this choice miscellany, wherein the music and the pictures blend in a synthetic symphony of sound and colour—reveal a virtuosity, a finish which are hers alone. They represent the acme of her craftsmanship. Were I called upon to find their companion piece, I would look to the French Parnassian Coppée, who, with a skill akin to hers and a soul but slightly less receptive than her soul, has often known how to transpose into terms of art, thanks to his flawless diction and to the perfect correspondence between the concrete and its verbal likeness, the most seemingly trivial details of the most seemingly grey life. But Coppée's triumphs in this sphere are at once more scattered and less sustained than Carmen Sylva's. She has forgotten not a single one among the workers, whether town or rural, and I cannot therefore introduce them all. But here, at random, are a few. Thus, to begin, the boatman on the Danube, in his alternate moods of toil and leisure:—

"Down stream 'tis all by moonlight,
Up stream at blazing noon;
Down stream upon the ripples,
Up stream through sandy dune.

Down stream the helm held loosely,
A pipe between the lips;
Up stream like beast one straineth
And galls the breast and hips."

Behold the solitary sower as he paces in rhythmic motion the brown and mellow soil : "Two steps and then a handful." While, over there, "Eight oxen spend and strain beneath the ploughing." Further afield, the velvet-coated beauties, with their golden eyes of velvet full of patient anguish. 'Tis fodder time, and the cows all listen, with necks outstretched. They greet the clover, "And how they lick their noses till they glisten!"

Now, still "In Clover" :—

"With kerchiefs red where the poppies grow,
 In midday shades,
Nod each to other and titter low
 Three little maids."

While the boyish rover looks askance ! It is a like brisk coquetry and tripping airiness, united to an even greater wealth of onomatopoeic effect, that lends both charm and magic to the twirling mill-wheel, as, similar to a maiden coy and faithless, it chats and chides and coaxes, and turns the miller's head ; that lends grace again to the lithe-limbed country lass, who listens to the May-bird's song and to the brooklet's dinning—while spinning. Now, from these rural and exhilarating sounds, let us pass on to the louder, more trying and nerve-racking hum that besets the city labourer. Here, it is true, the deeper emotional note may fire our fancy ; it does not gladden ; it is a woeful note. We watch the glass-blower, who, sadly although knowingly, is shortening his life at every breath he blows into the red-hot heat in order to perfect the glass, whence others, at his cost, will drink the joy of living, of mirth and song. We watch the lonely scissors-grinder, whose spirit, ground by hunger, has no ear save for the everlasting rasping drone of the bright, sharp steel on the dull and sullen flint. I would fain wager that he does not even hear the chorus of the stone-cutters :—

"We hammer, hammer, hammer on and on,
Day-out, day-in, from year to year;
In blazing heat and tempest drear
God's house we slowly heavenward rear."

So slowly, yea, that they will never see it done. The rope-maker, on the other hand, has the imaginative gift. As he plays out his

hemp, he already sees his cords as they stretch tense and sublime from the ship's bulwarks, like webs toward Heaven. He sees the sailors climb and clench them, in squall and storm, now scoffing at the booming waves below, now shivering and in prayer. And we, too, with the poet, are reaching gradually the higher rungs of the vocational ladder.

For we now view at their work the more well-to-do among the artisans; already plump with middle-class selfishness and snobbery and self-conceit; the diamond polisher, complacently spellbound by the radiating magic of his craft; the gilder, who grudgingly concedes *some* talent to a Rembrandt, a Rubens, a Murillo; yet calls them and the public a "thankless crew," since neither are disposed to own that but for the warm tone of his golden frames the greatest artists would be—nonentities! Indeed, throughout the whole range of these vocational portrayals we come across one artist, and but one, into whose soul the poet has, as it were, breathed something of Henri Heine's *Weltenschmerz*. He is the violin-maker. He knows how to dream, for he has understood that fancy has stores more rich than life, since dreams can gratify what life cannot, the yearnings of an artist's soul. So that, when the artist shall have tasted the immortal ecstasies of a perfect dream, life's spell will disappear. Hush! it is night; into the tiny workshop of our violin-maker there glides a quire of angels. And he sees them, and he hears them, in his sleep:—

"They took the violins to them,
As children the flowers they find;
They began an æolian quaver
As soft as the sound of the wind.

And then, to a symphony swelling,
To a burst of joy did it grow;
But between I heard a sobbing,
Ah! never do *men* weep so!

The spheres were singing with triumph,
The worlds were sobbing with woe;
The angels were laughing and playing
Like children with raiment aglow.

Come! take me now to the graveyard,
No longer the coffin I fear;
The violin playing of mortals
I never again can hear."

And none, I fancy, will challenge the exquisite suggestiveness and throbbing anguish that suffuse these lines, despite the flaws that must needs mar the most skilled renderings into alien verse. Still, there may be some who, with Matthew Arnold, would stubbornly deny the quality of greatness to all such poetry as does not deal with what they have been wont to call the greater subjects, heroic or spiritual, or, at any rate, to all such poetry as deals not with these subjects in a large and solemn setting. To them—as, indeed, to all, but to them especially—I would commend the reading, either in the original German verse, or in the impressive, not to say matchless, rendering into French Alexandrines by Mlle. Hélène Vacaresco—a true creation of its kind—of “Jehovah,” Carmen Sylva’s finest epic. She has here tackled the very problem which has exercised the minds of most, if not of all great poets of to-day and yesterday : the problem of religious doubt. In tackling which it may be that she cannot vie with Byron, nor with Shelley, nor with James Thomson, in their volcanic and—too often, as it happens—spluttering power. Nor can she boast the philosophic calm, the concentrated and compelling gaze of a Vigny or Leconte de Lisle ; nor yet the scientific if impassioned intuitions of a Swinburne or a Meredith. But she displays in this, her most notable achievement in both heroic and spiritual poetry, an unfailing and most logical orderliness of composition, an exalted and sustained dignity of thought, together with a stately but chastened diction. This diction, while it never swells to bombast, does not preclude the most sumptuous colouring nor the daintiest etching in the decorative piece-work.

In brief, her manner in this poem, as, indeed, her final inferences, are essentially original. And the very qualities I have striven to bring out make of this poem a most choice work of art, something incomparably more Grecian in the sober tastefulness of its pictorial raiment as of its dramatic effects than her earlier attempts in a like garb, her *Sappho*, strewn with lyrics that were the chief, and, it must be confessed, already notable adornment of that less ambitious but also less successful epic venture.

Truly, as the opening stanzas to the reader so beautifully remark, this poem of Jehovah is a mournful song, born under a gloomy sky ; 'tis a fierce challenge to what lies hidden, a song

of doubt, revolt, and anguish. Yea, 'tis none the less a fiery song, born under a blue and lukewarm sky, a song wherein man's soul doth groan, as he his God doth seek.

For in this poem, as we listen to the groans of its protagonist, Ahasverus, 'tis not of one man that we hear the groans, but of mankind—groans therefore far more poignant than the plaints of the more self-centred and romantic fire-stealers—the groans of our heart-sick, and stammering, and stumbling kin, as frenziedly they grope for bliss in their endeavour to grasp the Truth concerning their own origins and destiny. He is no isolated figure in our midst, this ruthless questioner, this Ahasverus, who cannot understand, and will not own a God that bleeds upon the wooden Cross, or from the heights of His blue heaven. He is not the only one among us who has claimed vainly, ere he would believe, a nearer vision of that God, whose awful tones are to the thunder like, whose awful breath doth bend with self-same ease the mighty oak, the slender stalk—so it was said in Holy Writ and by our Early Teachers. Nor does he stand alone upon the desert's scorched sands, beneath a leaden sky, on the Dead Sea's shores, on the white Nile's banks, to scrutinise in vain the dreamy Sphinx that blinks his heavy lids; nor yet again, a lonesome wanderer, close by the holy stream, in the weird jungle that teems with fresh, raw life and hoary murder, to challenge wearily the still, wan, bloodless visage of the centenarian Fakir. He is not the only one who, having sought God and happiness in the more contemplative life, and having failed to find them, has grown restless, and, in despair, has tried to win them in the life of action; who, with Mahomet, has spurred the foaming steed and mown with sword and stunned with battle-axe the Christian dogs; or, with Columbus, has set sail upon the vast, alluring, treacherous expanse, towards unknown worlds, in his lust for unknown power and unknown riches. And others than he, no doubt, have wielded that same sceptre and chimed that very gold, and even as he have come back disenchanted, to lose friendship on the way, to find on their return nought but oblivion, thanklessness, or, it may be, the bitter joy of daring the Inquisitioners, as their sole reward. Others, again, with him have striven, and still strive, and still will strive, to attain happiness in love, which they would fain see

in the wild gleams that play and tease between two silken lashes ; not love they have embraced, love's shadow ; to fatherhood they looked for joy, but soon they shrank with loathing and remorse from the heritage of wretchedness and doubt they had transmitted, willingly perhaps, perhaps unwillingly, in some mad moment of short-lived, thoughtless rapture. And others finally there are, still numerous if more rare, who, with Ahasverus, believed that they had clasped the Infinite, if for an instant only, in the artist's flawless, pious dream ; who had fancied, through art's eternity, to catch a glimpse of the divine, until on turning round they were reminded of Mother Earth and of her ruthless lesson of universal dust. But, happier at last than others, and, after endless wanderings amid the most diverse and glowing scenes, which I would gladly have portrayed to you in Carmen Sylva's verbal landscapes, Ahasverus has solved the eternal riddle. It happens on a fine spring morn, when, as in Eden, under the bright, soft sky, all is love, in love with others and itself ; men, beasts, and sensitive plants ; from the things that fly to the things that creep ; the snake, the butterfly. And Ahasverus, who lovingly, if vainly, had sought Jehovah all along, now feels and knows and sanctifies His reign in the dawn of everything that is, that lives only but to die, and live again, in the Spirit of the Universe, in Nature's soul : "Gott ist das ewig Werden" (God is the Eternal to be). So that, having recognised that this is God, and Good, and Great, Ahasverus, to fulfil his early vow, falls dead in Nature's bosom, joyful in the knowledge that he is, after all, but making way for the generations of the morrow. And some, perhaps, might wish for a more scientific argument, a more doctrinal conclusion, or at any rate for a more definite teaching than is afforded us by Carmen Sylva's poetic pantheism. In my view, if indeed there be any vagueness in her pantheism that is not inherent to pantheism itself, such vagueness serves but to bring out the better her broad religious tolerance, which would suggest many points of comparison with Tennyson's in *Akbar's Dream*. It is this self-same tolerance bred of her native bounty that in another sphere, of a more practical morality, has dictated to her such thoughts as this : "Be a Puritan yourself, but do not insist on Puritanism in others" ; or again : "A woman's

virtue ought indeed to be great, since it has often to suffice for two," a pronouncement wherein her bounty is not unmixed with a quizzical sense of humour.

And now, but for the special occasion which has earned for me the privilege of reviewing the poetical works of Carmen Sylva, I should have ended with my review of this truly impressive poem of *Jehovah*, which is undoubtedly its author's strongest claim to a very high place, both in contemporary European literature and in the annals of German poetry.

But Carmen Sylva has a claim which, although a minor one in the eyes of European criticism, partakes on this occasion, and for our Royal Society of *English Literature*, of an especial significance and bearing. Some years ago this richly endowed linguist replied to the rhymed homage of the Provençal *Félibristes* in the very language and the metre of Marot and Ronsard. A little later, to a similarly rhymed homage from the Welsh bards, whose good fortune it was—a good fortune we may well envy them—to welcome her in person at one of their yearly festivals, she replied in English verse, of which, unfortunately, I possess no copy. But on the other hand, I have happened recently upon a rare treasury of English blank verse which she published in 1904, in an edition now exhausted.

And from this treasury I will cull the following lines; not only with a keen sense of pride in the compliment which they imply both to our language and to our poetry, but with a profound consciousness of the mournful and hallowed occasion that inspired them, as, indeed, of the truly poetic, truly womanly, and right royal tribute which they contain, from one who *is* a noble woman and a noble queen to one who *was* a noble woman and a noble queen: the tribute of Queen Elizabeth of Roumania to the memory of our dead Queen Victoria:—

"These ever-watchful eyes are closed. They saw
Such grief, that they could see no more. The heart—
That quick'ning pulse of nations—could not bear
Another throb of pain, and could not hear
Another cry of tortur'd motherhood.
Those uncomplaining lips, they sob no more

The soundless sobs of dark and burning tears,
 That none have seen; they smile no more, to breathe
 A mother's comfort into aching hearts.
 The patriarchal Queen, the monument
 Of touching widowhood, of endless love,
 And childlike purity—she sleeps. This night
 Is watchful not. The restless hand, that slave
 To duty, to a master-mind, to wisdom
 That fathomed history and saw beyond
 The times, lies still in marble whiteness. Love
 So great, so faithful, unforgetting and
 Unselfish—must it sleep? Or will that veil,
 That widow's veil unfold, and spread into
 The dove-like wings, that long were wont to hover
 In anxious care about her world-wide nests,
 And now will soar and sing, as harp-chords sing,
 Whilst in their upward flight they breast the wind
 Of Destiny. No rest for her, no tomb,
 Nor ashes! Light eternal! Hymns of joy!
 No silence now for her, who, ever silent
 Above misfortune's storms and thund'ring billows
 Would stand with clear and fearless brow, so calm,
 That men drew strength from out those dauntless eyes
 And quiet from that hotly beating heart."

And there is something of this self-same strength and quiet
 to be gleaned and garnered from the life and works of Roumania's
 Queen of Hearts and Rhyme.

At this meeting, in the absence of the President, the Earl of Halsbury, who had been compelled to leave the Society's rooms earlier in the afternoon by the demands of public business, Prof. W. L. Courtney, Vice-President, presided, and, in formally admitting Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth of Roumania as an Honorary Fellow of the Society, expressed the gratification of the President, Council, and general body of the Fellows in having the name of "Carmen Sylva" on the Roll of the Society.

His Excellency, M. Nicolas Mishu, the Roumanian Minister, as Her Majesty's proxy, said :—

"I am commanded by Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth to convey to you 'Carmen Sylva's' most heartfelt thanks for the great com-

pliment you have bestowed upon her by electing her an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

"Our crowned poetess is the more proud to be a Fellow of your Society, since yours is a literature that has given forth so many of the world's greatest works in the imaginative realm.

"‘Carmen Sylva,’ from her earliest attempts in art and literature, has acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the leading manifestations of the English creative genius. She still follows with the deepest interest all the latest efforts of your modern literature, and is a sincere admirer of its high standards.

"In a booklet published some twenty years ago, entitled *The Thoughts of a Queen*, ‘Carmen Sylva’ said that ‘the only happiness is duty, the only consolation work, the only joy in life the love of the beautiful.’

"This ideal is also yours, and it was therefore but natural that ‘Carmen Sylva’s’ name and thoughts should be closely linked to the Royal Society of Literature.

"In your strivings for the highest ideals in literature you will always have with you ‘Carmen Sylva,’ the royal poetess.

"In her name, therefore, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and you, Prof. Gerothwohl, for the eloquent words of appreciation which you have spoken at this solemn gathering."

THE NATIVE LITERATURE OF CHRISTIAN EGYPT.

BY STEPHEN GASELEE, F.R.S.L.,
Fellow and Librarian of Magdalene College, Cambridge.

[Read April 22nd, 1914.]

By the word “native” which I have employed in the title of this paper I mean “untranslated”; the vast majority of the remains of Christian Egyptian literature which has survived until the present time was translated from the Greek; a little from Syriac, mere traces from Latin, Arabic, Ethiopic. It is my object to give some account of that which is Egyptian in origin—first written in Egyptian language.

I shall not delay you long with an historical account of the beginnings of a literature in Christian Egypt, but the brief sketch that here follows is necessary for the proper understanding of the conditions under which it grew up.

Never, perhaps, in the history of the world did one nation take upon itself more completely, at any rate in appearance, the culture of another, than Egypt, when it accepted Greek ideas and expressions of thought after its conquest by Alexander the Great. Quicker far than in later days, when “Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit” at Rome, about A.D. 300 “Graecia captrix” seemed to have won a spiritual and intellectual, as well as a physical,

victory over the land of the Pharaohs. The successful invasion by Alexander was no mere foreign raid,* of which every trace would disappear in two or three generations. That old nation, which had bent, but never broken, before the cruel blast of the monotheist invader from Persia, seemed to take to its inmost being without a shudder the civilisation, decadent perhaps, but not yet corrupt, of imperial Greece. I should esteem it, therefore, no mere chance that in the Christian literature of Egypt the figure of Alexander appears almost with the halo of a saint. The author of the Alexander romance, ‘Pseudo-Callisthenes,’ which is known to us partly in Greek, Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian, and more than fully in Ethiopic, represents him as at once the ideal of a Christian knight and a missionary of the Gospel before the Gospel existed—a preacher by prolepsis of the Trinity—and at the same time (did not Theocritus† call the Egyptians *κακὰ παιγνία*, “roguish cheats”?) the progeny of the frailty of Olympias with the last native-born king of Egypt, the sorcerer Nectanebo.

The land of the Nile, at any rate, became profoundly Hellenised. The Greek dynasty of the Ptolemies, though it adopted some of the less praiseworthy customs of the country, such as the regular marriage of brother and sister, established at the top of society a Greek culture, which percolated far downward; in architecture, money, games, all social life, the land became as Greek as Asia Minor, if not as

* J. Leipoldt, “Geschichte der koptischen Litteratur,” in ‘Geschichte der christlichen Litteraturen des Orients (Die Litteraturen des Ostens, vii. 2),’ Leipzig, 1907, p. 133, sqq.

† *Id.*, xv, 50.

Greece itself; even the venerable Egyptian language seems to have retreated before the invader, and many of the more important inscriptions of Ptolemaic times which remain to us are in Greek. When the old language was employed the hieroglyphic system of writing was retained for certain ceremonial purposes; hieratic had nearly disappeared before demotic, which was used where the vulgar might have to read. It is not uncommon, for instance, to find the name on a mummy-ticket both in Greek and Demotic. Greek became the language of the Court, the army, the civil service, the law; even new gods were invented, to be added to the already overgrown Egyptian pantheon, of half-Greek attributes and names. Such were Serapis and Harpocrates, two hybrid deities whose worship became immensely popular among the Graecised Egyptians of the two last centuries before Christ.

Yet I purposely used the words “in appearance” when I described the extent to which Greek culture had been assumed. The process of Hellenisation had not reached down to the lowest strata of all. The peasants—Fellaheen, very like their successors of to-day—kept their own language and their own religion. I think that their steadfastness was more the result of obstinacy than of patriotism or piety. Egypt has always been a country at heart “ag’in the Government.” Look, for instance, at its religious history in later Christian times; when the Empire was Arian, Egypt was orthodox; when the Empire became orthodox, nothing would do for Egypt but to become and remain monophysite. The Greeks and Graecised Egyptians were an object of hatred to

the lower classes, mostly day-labourers, because their employers oppressed them and defrauded them of their wages ; and Alexandria was always regarded by the rest of Egypt as a foreign settlement, and accordingly despised and abhorred. The Coptic word for “swindler,” “impostor,” “parasite” is simply the equivalent* in that language of “an Alexandrian merchant”; and the Copticised form† of the name “Ionian” (the Egyptian generic term for a Greek) remained the general designation for a heathen of any sort. By the beginning, then, of our era the peasants were not unwilling to accept any religious system which was thoroughly distasteful to the Greek and Graecised upper classes; and it has also been supposed‡ by Dr. Flinders Petrie (not, I think, without some truth) that they possessed certain predispositions deep in their character, beliefs, and modes of thought which made them particularly susceptible to the advance of Christianity, and indeed enabled them to accept it gladly without much disturbance to their most sacred convictions and feelings. They were familiar, he would urge, in the first place with the notion of the existence of Eternity before Time, an essential dogma of historical Christianity, and a premise of both sides in the Arian controversy; with a ceremony

* *σαρακυτε* or *σαρακοτε*. *σα* is a monosyllabic prefix denoting a merchant or artisan in any trade; *ρακοτε*, the old Egyptian name for Alexandria, or rather originally for the unimportant town which existed on the site where Alexander placed his city.

† *ονεεεεννν*. An interesting form, showing that the digamma (*ΙFάωνες*) was pronounced in the word at the time that it was taken over into Egyptian; could it have come through some Semitic channel (“Javan”) and not directly from the Greek?

‡ “Egypt and Israel.” London. 1911.

not unlike the Agape (the tomb-feasts of the ancient religion); with the joint veneration of a mother* and child, Isis and Osiris, so that there are now in existence some statuettes about which scholars and critics have not yet been able to decide whether they represent the heathen deities or the Virgin and Bambino; and, we may well add, with the idea of the death and resurrection of a god, Osiris; and, most important of all, with the strongest belief in the hereafter, and in a final judgment, with rewards and punishments. Among the lower orders, who held the doctrines of their religion firmly, without any great faith in its mythology, Christianity appears to have been accepted almost without a struggle; and persecution, coming first from the great land-owners and then from the Imperial authorities, seems only to have strengthened them in their faith. I do not think that Christianity as adopted by the Egyptian peasant was always of a very high order. The Egyptian believed in magic as firmly as he believed in anything, and Christ and His saints appeared to him as a company of mighty magicians; but, at any rate, Christ as judge was also always present to their minds, and the belief in Christ as redeemer did not fail to come later on.†

The new religion was aided by another—a purely secular consideration. The old Egyptian writing was almost dead. A few heathen priests retained some knowledge of hieroglyphics down to the time

* Against this it might be urged that in the *early* Egyptian Church there is very little trace of the cult of the Virgin.

† See J. Leipoldt, "Die Entstehung der koptischen Kirche," Halle a. S., 1905.

of the Emperor Decius, but they wrote them clumsily, with gross grammatical mistakes, and for nothing more important than chronologies and records of ritual performed. The Demotic struggled on ; but surely there was never a less satisfactory system of writing. Some hundreds of signs were in use, of which a very few represented single letters ; the rest were syllabic signs. The clever expedient, too, of the old writing—the use of the determinative —was no longer an assistance, but had introduced a new difficulty : for, whereas it was undoubtedly a great help in hieroglyphics to find a little picture of a pig drawn after the word for pig had been syllabically spelled out, when that little picture had degenerated into a mere conventional scrawl, with no likeness at all to the object it was supposed to represent, only one more hindrance to reading and understanding was introduced by its employment. Matters literary and graphical had reached a deadlock, and the problem was solved, by whom we know not, by the very simple expedient of employing the Greek alphabet to write down the Egyptian language. As Greek had no signs to represent some sounds* very common in Egyptian (especially certain sibilants, aspirates, and gutturals), seven signs were adopted from the Demotic syllabary for this purpose. The result is Coptic as we know it

* The sounds unrepresented in Greek were *sh*, *f* (which in Greek properly pronounced is *not* equivalent to *ph*), *h* (stronger than the Greek *Spiritus asper*), the English *j*, and a curious guttural, perhaps not wholly unlike the Arabic *ghain*, which varied between a *q* and a *zh*. In the Northern Dialect there was also a strong guttural *kh*. For no particular reason, a syllabic sign or ligature for *ti* was also introduced.

to-day. Coptic is nothing more than ancient Egyptian (or something a good deal more like ancient Egyptian than Italian is like Latin), written down for us in Greek letters. The visitor to Cairo who attends service in a Coptic church hears what must undoubtedly be the oldest language in the world; many of the words and forms are unchanged since the beginning of Egyptian as we know it, long before the days of Abraham and the earliest extant Hebrew.

The change to the new style of writing, which may well have occurred in the second century A.D., did not suddenly appear in its full development. There are some previous attempts at similar transcriptions, known as the Old Coptic texts.* These are usually of the nature of interlinear glosses in Demotic papyri; they are often of an astrological nature. There is, for instance, a horoscope in the British Museum,† for which a date, or rather a choice of two dates, can be calculated. It seems, from astronomical considerations, to have been composed either for A.D. 94 or A.D. 154, and as it was presumably cast in the lifetime of the person interested, it may safely be put in the second century A.D., probably nearer the beginning than the end. The contents are not unlike those found in so many horoscopes: "His

* Edited most recently and best by F. Ll. Griffith in the 'Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache,' xxxviii, p. 71, and xxxix, p. 78.

† Crum, 'Catalogue of Coptic MSS. in B. M.' No. 366. First published by C. W. Goodwin in Z. Ä. ('Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache'), vi, p. 18, later by Griffith, *l. c.*, cf. Krall in 'Mittheilungen Rainer,' I, 109. There are other remains of the same kind of literature in the collections at Paris and at Leiden, published by Revillout, Leemans, and others.

destiny is that he shall meet with a wound in the winter; the god shall fall into a hostile attitude, and he shall approach nigh unto death; he shall depart from a mercantile business, where his star is a noxious star; from his forty-second year a wife shall be brought to him; he shall cherish her till he is ninety-four, and then shall be brought unto death." Also of the second century appear to be two bilingual mummy tickets,* Greek and Coptic, from Athribis. In one of them the Coptic is peculiar as running from right to left (as Demotic did), instead of the ordinary left to right direction adopted by Coptic from Greek.

But these remnants of paganism in Coptic are very few. As I said a little before, the new religion was assisted by the new form of writing, and it is probable that each had an inter-action on the other; that Coptic was also helped by Christianity. It was not merely that for the sacred writings of the new faith a simpler and less cumbrous medium was found, but also Christianity was enabled to make a fresh start with a language unpolluted by heathen ideas and forms. In the hieroglyphics many of the signs actually represented the gods and goddesses of the Egyptian pantheon, and the objection was only less to their disguised forms in Demotic; but now, in Coptic writing, a fresh medium was found for the propagation of the truth—a medium never defiled by the impure ancient legends and thoughts; just as Constantinople was for many centuries considered the Christian city *par excellence* of the world, because no pagan rites had ever been practised within its

* Published by Steindorff, Z. Ä., xxviii, p. 49.

walls. To such an extent did the Copts feel that they had now a wholly Christian tongue, that they had no scruple in preserving as Christian names words which had actually been the titles and names of the old deities. Horus, Amnon, Phoebammon, Anubis, even Horus-son-of-Isis, were all names* of Christian monks.

The earliest history of this part of the Christian Church is wrapped in impenetrable darkness.† There seems no particular reason to disbelieve the story told over and over again, without contradiction in early days, that Egypt was evangelised by St. Mark. The apocryphal acts of the Apostles, even though in later times they became overlaid with puerile wonders, often held some germs of truth. In the ‘Acts of Barnabas’ St. Mark is made to say that he went first with St. Barnabas to Cyprus; but afterwards, owing to the opposition of a certain Bar-Jesus, “I fled to Alexandria, and there I remained, teaching the brethren that came the word of the Lord, giving light unto them and preaching the Gospel to them, even as I had been taught by the Apostles of Christ.” Supposing that these apocryphal acts reached their final form in the fifth century, I see no particular reason to doubt that in this instance the account of St. Mark’s journey and preaching may be based on a true tradition.

We have continuous patriarchal lists of St. Mark’s successors, and as far as the names go they may be

* *hwρ, αμμων, φοιβαμμων, ανουβ* or *ανουπ, hwρσιηστ.*

† Best discussed by the Archimandrite Chrysostom Papadopoulos, Πρῶται ἡμίραι τῆς Ἑκκλησίας Ἀλεξανδρείας, in the Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος for August and September, 1909. Leipoldt, ‘Die Entstehung,’ etc., is too sceptical.

accurate enough, but we know with certainty no historical details of their rule until about the year 200, when we find a certain Demetrius, the twelfth patriarch, mentioned by Eusebius as “reigning like a king in Egypt.” From his time onward our sources are much fuller; we have, for instance, the ‘Patriarchal History’* of Severus ibn el Muqaffa, Bishop of Ashmunain in Upper Egypt in the seventh century; his work depended both on Eusebius and on many primitive documents and acts which have now disappeared. Though the ‘History’ must be used with caution, it is trustworthy on the whole for the three or four centuries before his own time, and from it and other like compositions the story of the Church of Alexandria can be made out without great difficulty.

But here I must diverge. It is not the history of the Church of Alexandria which will help us in our present investigation, but the history of the Church of Egypt—a very different thing. In the distant monasteries of the Libyan and Nitrian deserts, and far up the Nile almost to the confines of the barbarians, we must look for that really Egyptian Christianity that regarded the Christians of Alexandria, Greek-speaking and Greek-thinking, with suspicion or worse—as foreigners and probably crypto-heretics.

St. Anthony, the real founder of Christian monasticism in Egypt, lived the hundred years between 250 and 350. In his youth he went to visit one

* Now extant in Arabic, presumably translated from a Coptic original. Edited and translated by B. Evetts, in ‘Patrologia Orientalis,’ I, 2, 4; V, 1, etc.

Paul the Anchorite, and by the details given us of Paul's age and the time he had spent in the solitary life, he may be supposed to have retired to the desert about 200. Yet this was but a "false dawn" of monasticism; the great colonisation of monks led by St. Anthony took place between 300 and 310. He chose a spot about twenty-five miles from the Red Sea, somewhat south and a good deal east of the modern Cairo; and then the movement spread fast. About 320 Pachomius founded his famous monastery and laid down his more famous rule at Tabennese in Upper Egypt, and other monks were rapidly settling in the Nitrian desert towards the Oasis of Ammon. By the end of the fourth century the numbers were enormous. Palladius found 5000 monks in Nitria; there were as many at Tabennese, and very few less at St. Anthony's foundation. At Oxyrhynchus there were 10,000 in all, and we are told that the Bishop of that diocese had 20,000 nuns under his charge. At Panopolis the two great monasteries were towns in themselves. It has been computed that about the year 450 half the adult population of Egypt (excluding Alexandria) were monks or nuns, and in some parts of the country there were villages in which there were no full-grown individuals not under monastic vows.

The earliest monuments of Coptic literature, dating from the time before the monasteries began to be founded and the time when they were in course of foundation, are almost exclusively translations from the Greek, and therefore outside the scope of the present paper. The Bible was very early translated; indeed, a British Museum papyrus has lately

been published by Dr. Wallis Budge, containing the Coptic texts of certain books of the Bible, which is claimed on palaeographical grounds (not, I think, quite certain) as earlier than any extant Greek manuscript. The Book of Job is undoubtedly in a pre-Hexaplaric form. The translation of the Lord's Prayer into one of the dialects* has a curious form in one of the petitions ("Thy will in heaven, may it be done on earth") which is otherwise found only in some extremely primitive Christian documents. The literature of this period (apart from the critical value of the Bible version) is of the greatest interest to us for its preservation of Apocryphal Gospels and of a fairly large quantity of Gnostic literature, of which the Greek originals have long ago disappeared.

But in the monasteries purely Egyptian thought was working. St. Anthony probably did not know Greek, and we are told that a "lector" would read off the Bible into Coptic from a Greek text, as Hugh Miller† relates of Gaelic, from the English version, in the Highlands; but the greatest man ever produced by the Coptic nation, the one writer in this literature to show real force and to whom originality can be attributed, was a fair Greek scholar, though he thought and wrote in Coptic. This was the Abbot Shenoute, also known by his Graecised name

* Fayumic ('Recueil de Travaux,' xi, p. 116). πετεχνηκ λν τπη μαλεψωπι hcjεv πκδη. The versions in all the dialects have "to-morrow's bread give us to-day." The doxology corresponds with that in the 'Didache.'

† 'My Schools and School-Masters.' A friend has told me that entering a church in Wales where one of the lessons was being read in Welsh, the parson looked up, and seeing an English stranger, read it through again, translating broadly into English.

of Sinuthius, who lived between the years 350 and 450. We possess his life,* written by his disciple and successor, Besa, which tells us that he was the son of a shepherd, and notable for his piety from his early youth. He had monastic connections, for his maternal uncle Pjol was the first abbot of the White Monastery near Akhmin, or Panopolis, Shenoute himself coming from a little village called Shenalolet, near Athribis. The boy's father, seeing in him evident tokens of a vocation to the monastic life, took him to his uncle to receive his blessing; and it appears to have been not very much later that Shenoute took the monastic habit, and entered the monastery where he was to spend the rest of his days. He rapidly rose to a commanding position among the monks, becoming well known both for his literary powers and for the value of his ascetic writings, and on the death of Pjol he naturally succeeded to the abbot's position. He had received a good education—more probably he had taught himself with application during his early days in the monastery, where there was a good library, as we know from extant remains. He must have known Greek pretty well, judging from his works. He was the one Coptic stylist; his writings, though of very great difficulty, are in elaborated periods and possess the graces of antithesis and emphasis. His letters and sermons are models of what an abbot's

* Originally written in the Sa'idiic or Southern dialect of Coptic, we possess it now in the Bohairic or Northern dialect. Excerpts in Zoega, 'Cat. Codd. Coptorum,' p. 33, edited with a French translation by Amélineau in the 'Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique au Caire,' vol. iv; best by Leipoldt, 'Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium,' Script, Copt. II, ii, 1.

should be, who is at the same time a despot. He had the power of life and death over his monks (and used it). He showed his vigour in action, as when he would lead a party of the brethren to destroy with fire and sword some relic of the fast-disappearing paganism retained by the Greek nobility of Upper Egypt. Late in life he had a moment's contact with the outside world's history. He was taken* by St. Cyril to the Council of Ephesus, where we hear a very curious and characteristic story of him. In the middle of the Church, where the Council assembled, was a "throne"—a large chair, on which a book of the Gospels was placed. Nestorius, coming in rather late, thought that the place was meant for him, moved the Gospels off on to the floor, and sat down on the chair. At this Shenoute was furiously incensed, picked up the Gospels and flung them at Nestorius, saying, "So the Son of God must sit upon the floor while thou sittest on a throne." "What right hast thou to be in the Council," retorted Nestorius, "seeing that thou art neither Bishop nor Archimandrite?" "I am here," replied the furious abbot, "to confound thee and thy errors," and thrust him from the chair; whereat St. Cyril stripped off his own outer robe, threw it upon Shenoute's neck, and made him an Archimandrite upon the spot, to the joy of the assembled Fathers. Twenty years later he was again summoned—this time by Dioscorus—to go to the Council of Chalcedon, but by now he was too

* During this journey he seems to have visited Constantinople and to have seen some plays of Aristophanes. He took the choruses of the 'Frogs' and 'Birds' very seriously, finding in the imitations of the animals' cries signs of idolatry.

old and ill to go, and his death occurred about the same time that the Council was held. It must have been earlier in Shenoute's life than the Council of Ephesus that we hear of his dealings with the barbarian invaders from the South—the Blemmyes. They raided into Egypt, and hurriedly retired, carrying with them large spoils and a great number of captives. Shenoute hurried after them, interviewed their chiefs, by whom he was well received, and persuaded them to keep the booty but give up the men, who numbered several thousands. These Shenoute housed for a time in his monasteries, providing them food, though with considerable difficulty, until he could send them back to their homes.*

His literary remains are voluminous, though unfortunately, like so much of Coptic literature, fragmentary. Owing to the destruction of monastic libraries by the Saracens a complete manuscript is the rarest thing in the world, and most of Coptic literature is preserved in separate leaves or gatherings of three or four, scattered among the different libraries of Europe. A complete edition† of these remains is now in course of publication. The majority of them deal with the monastic life—advice to individual monks and nuns on the attainment of ascetic perfection, threats addressed to those who seemed likely to hold lightly the vows they had taken on entering, practical advice to abbots and

* A general and complete work on the life of Shenoute and discussion of the monasticism of his place and time in J. Leipoldt, 'Shenoute von Atrię,' Leipzig, 1913.

† Again J. Leipoldt, 'Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium,' Script. Copt. II; iv, v.

abbesses who found difficulties in their charge—but there are also interesting pieces of correspondence with the civil governors of Upper Egypt, and letters on theological points addressed to the Patriarchs of Alexandria during his time. There is even a curious Apocalypse—an account of his own visions and interviews with the Saviour. We have not all of it in its original Coptic, but it exists more fully in an Ethiopic translation. Shenoute's works did not gain currency among the monks of Egypt alone. They were widely read and copied by the laity, and in later days translated into other languages. The impression of his character and his writings upon the Coptic Church may be seen from the fact that at the present time portions of his homilies are the only texts outside Scripture which are publicly read as lessons in the Church Services.

Almost at the moment of Shenoute's death two great events were happening which marked the beginning of ruin to the Copts. The Council of Chalcedon condemned the monophysite doctrine, and Egypt refused to accept the decree. So strong had been the condemnation by the Egyptians of the heresies of Nestorius that they unconsciously tended to the other extreme. In St. Cyril the tendency—it is not yet anything more—may already be observed: in his successor, Dioscorus, it has become heresy. The consequence was that at the end of the fifth century Egypt—with the doubtful support of part of Syria—stood alone; and this paved the way for the *débâcle* of the Saracen conquest. Heretics could not hope for the whole-hearted support of orthodox Christendom; and internecine

strife within the country—the obstinate contention of Jacobite and Melchite—made the government too weak to resist the united and warlike invader. From the conquest of Egypt by Amr until the nineteenth century the Copts lived under an oppression more or less severe. Sometimes comparative quiet, sometimes real and savage persecution; the majority of the nation have succumbed to the pressure and become Moslems. The faithful remnant has lost its language (except in the services of the Church), and does not now probably count more than about one-fifteenth of the whole population of the land.

But what meanwhile of its literary activities? The Copts had translated comparatively little of the Greek literature of the pre-Nicene Church, but a very great quantity of that produced between the Council of Nicaea and that of Chalcedon. After Chalcedon they were thrown more completely on their own resources, as they would not care to introduce into their own language the writings of those they considered heretics. They translated freely the writings of Severus of Antioch, whom they considered almost as one of themselves; he became indeed one of the leading saints of the Monophysite Church. But the harvest of native literature was neither large nor valuable. It took, in particular, the form of a very elaborate series* of ‘Acts of Martyrs,’ most of them filled with rather childish marvels, in which a saint may suffer the

* Most of these accounts are ascribed to a certain Julius of Chbehs, who was a kind of general witness and reporter of the Martyr’s sufferings, ending in martyrdom himself. The persecution under Diocletian is the supposed period of the majority of them.

most horrible tortures for seven years, or be raised miraculously twenty times from the dead to meet new and agonised methods of punishment.

Amid a very dull mass of literature two tendencies of rather greater interest may be observed—the growth of religious fiction and the growth of a certain amount of popular (still religious) poetry. I pass over the ‘Romance of Alexander the Great,’ as translated work, but mention may be made of the ‘Cambyses Romance,’ in which the success of native Egypt under its Pharaoh against the Persian invader is described with wealth of apocryphal detail; and of stories such as that of Theodosius and Dionysius, two poor Coptic peasants, who become respectively Emperor and Patriarch of Constantinople. To this time also we may ascribe some of the stories of saints (though we now have them only in a rather later form), with a certain romantic interest, such as that of Hilaria, daughter of the Emperor Zeno, who left her home dressed as a man, and became a monk under the name of Hilarion. The poetry of the period is unfortunately only preserved* to us in fragments. Such as we possess seems to date mostly from the ninth and tenth centuries, when there was a kind of literary revival; testified also by the number of manuscripts of parts of the Bible and of patriotic works surviving from this time. The poems are mostly written on existing themes, many of them well-known passages

* A. Erman, “Bruchstücke koptischer Volkslitteratur” in the *Abhandlungen* of the Prussian Academy for 1897. Junker, ‘Koptische Poesie des zehnten Jahrhunderts,’ originally published in the Roman periodical ‘Oriens Christianus,’ and then separately at Berlin, 1908 and 1911.

from the Old and New Testaments. Solomon and the visit of the Queen of Sheba, for instance, are treated at some length, and the betrayal of Christ by Judas, which is put into the form of a reproach addressed by the Redeemer to His betrayer. I will, however, take as an example one of the comparatively few addressed to saints. There is one hymn devoted to the praises of the famous Abbot Shenoute, of whom I have already spoken :

“Blessed art thou, our father Apa Shenoute, filled with the Holy Ghost, Father of all monks; thou art like a tree that giveth forth good fruit, and the pleasant odour thereof goeth forth into all the world. In all the world is thy name honoured because of thine ordinances and thy ascetic practices; thou didst wear the angelic garment, and instruct thy [spiritual] children in holiness. Then didst thou exchange earth for heaven, and rejoice with the Saviour in His Kingdom. Pray unto the Lord for us, our father, Apa Shenoute, that He may have mercy upon us and forgive us our sins.”

The hymns seem to have been written to definite tunes, doubtless well known to the reader, for they are quoted in an abbreviated form at the beginning of each. We have: “To the tune of ‘My Child,’ ‘The Gospel,’ ‘I and my Father,’ ‘For a Woman’s Sake,’ ‘Mary’s Picture,’ ‘The Five Letters,’” or one of the plagal tones used in the Church Services. The dialect in which the poems (or most of them) are written allows us to say that their *provenance* seems to have been Middle Egypt: some probably from the Fayoum province.

If the latest of these poems is of the eleventh century, as their most recent editor believes, we are

approaching the end of Coptic as a spoken language in literary circles, although it lingered in some out of the way villages in the Thebaid, among peasants, into the seventeenth century. We have one poem of some length which may be dated roughly in the thirteenth century. It is significant of the change of language that it is provided with an Arabic translation. We find, too, that now for the first time rhyme enters into Coptic poetry—also the result of Arabic influence. The poem* (which exists in a single manuscript at Naples) consisted originally of something like 750 stanzas, of which we now possess 428. It is called the “Triadon,” which describes its metrical form. The stanzas are of four lines each; the first three rhyme with each other, while the fourth always end with the letter “n,” and almost always with the letters “on”; the last word of the fourth line is generally, but not always, a Greek word introduced (as so many were) into Coptic. The author seems to have been a native of Panopolis—we do not know his name—and to have been inspired with a genuine desire to instruct his brother Copts, in their own language, in the whole field of knowledge, which was of course prevailingly religious. He gives in his curious verse much detail from the Bible and allusions to many saints. He is sound on the essentials of the monophysite faith. I will make an attempt to translate two† of his stanzas giving the doctrinal position of the Copts, with a vague imitation of his metre and method of rhyme:

* Edition by O. von Lemm, St. Petersburg, 1903.

† Von Lemm, *op. cit.*, 629 and 630.

“ In Him, who light divine displayed
 On those that sat in darkness’ shade,
 No separation must be made
 Betwixt Manhood and Deity.

Believe, that Deity was one
 With Manhood ; and he preached alone
 To men, who far from God had gone,
 And taken Mammon’s fealty.”

It is clear from many indications that Coptic was hardly a living language at the time of the “Triadon.” The writer says that he could scarcely have composed it unless he had been to some extent inspired, and his very difficult and involved sentences can often with difficulty be made out without the help of the Arabic version.

I have not had time to speak of the non-literary documents (letters, contracts, and other legal instruments), of which we have a good number of this age. It is only worth mentioning that writing material had grown so scarce and dear that the inconvenient medium of *ostraca*, or broken pieces of pottery, were freely used for quite long documents. There are also some remains—interesting, but I cannot consider them here—of mediæval receipts (usually of the wildest and most bizarre nature) and magical formulae.

With the exception of the tenth-century hymns or religious poems which I mentioned a few moments ago, all the literature considered up to this point has been in the dialect of Upper Egypt. By the earlier Coptic scholars this was called Thebaic ; but it became clear that it covered a far

wider district than Thebes or the Thebaid, and it is now usual to adopt the nomenclature of a native grammarian,* and to call it Sa'idiic, from the Arabic Es-Sa'íd, the name for Upper Egypt generally. It is clear from the inscriptions found in the monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara that Sa'idiic reached down the Nile very nearly as far as the modern Cairo. But in the Delta a somewhat different dialect was spoken, called (on the same authority) Bohairie; and, though we have almost no remains of it from the time when it was spoken, it developed a late importance as the ecclesiastical language of the Coptic Church. As the Patriarch of Alexandria moved his residence up from the see whence he takes his name to Cairo, he seems to have brought his own language with him; and at the present time the Bohairie is the dialect used in church the whole way from the Mediterranean to Khartoum. The literature of this dialect was the first known to European scholars, and the early grammars (up till about 1800) deal with it almost exclusively. It is true that the Sa'idiic contains more of permanent interest, both theologically and for the history of Egypt, but the Bohairie or northern dialect has of late fallen into rather unmerited neglect.

We possess in it most of the Bible and the liturgical books of the Coptic Church, and a very large number of Acts of Martyrs, together with a fair amount of patristic literature, much of which is still unedited. But nearly all of this is translated,

* Athanasius, Bishop of Qós, in the eleventh century. On him and the other indigenous mediaeval grammarians see A. Mallon, "Une école de Savants Égyptiens au Moyen age," in the *'Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale de Beyrouth.'* i and ii, 1906 and 1907.

directly or indirectly, from the Greek, and is, therefore, outside my present view. I shall confine myself to a small part of it where the composition is undoubtedly native. As the language had by this time ceased to be spoken, the literary harvest is naturally small, and I shall not now detain you more than a few minutes longer.

The tenth-century hymns or religious poems had their successors in the later literature, and we possess a considerable number of such compositions scattered about among the lesser service-books of the Coptic Church. There is, for instance, an “Antiphonarium,”* or collection of hymns on the lives of the saints. Though itself in Coptic, it seems to be founded on the Arabic “Synaxarium,” or “Aeta Sanctorum” of the Coptic Church, and it may possibly date from the fourteenth century. Not long after that time the fashion increased (it had begun much earlier) of writing in acrostics, and many hymns were written in four-line stanzas, each beginning, in order, with a different letter of the alphabet. These are to be found both in separate books of hymns and in a liturgical book called the ‘Theotokia,’† which exists in various forms and recensions. The book is partly (as its name implies) composed of odes and hymns to the Blessed Virgin, but the commemoration of other saints is also included.

I have for the last two or three years amused

* Not yet printed. MSS. in the John Rylands Library at Manchester, and at Göttingen and Rome.

† First printed by the Uniat Coptic Bishop Raphael Tuki. Rome, 1764. See also De Lacy O’Leary, ‘The Daily Office and Theotokia of the Coptic Church,’ London, 1911.

myself by the collection of these alphabetical hymns from manuscripts in those public libraries of England which possess Coptic material. I have copied 207 in all, of which only about thirty have been printed. It is very difficult to estimate the date of their composition. One manuscript, which contains some of them, dates from the middle of the fifteenth century, and I should imagine that they went on being composed for the next two hundred years. The authors occasionally introduced their names into the last verse of the hymns. I have noticed those of Abraham, Joseph, Jeremias the son of the Hegoumenos or Arch-Priest of a church, Sergius, and a very prolific writer named Nicodemus. It is regrettable that Nicodemus, who is responsible for fifty or sixty hymns, was of little merit as a versifier. The sense of his compositions is bald, and he often repeats himself. Except the names, I know nothing of the authors, their date, or place.

I quote a few stanzas from a hymn* written for the festival of the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt—a commemoration naturally beloved by the Copts :

“ He was in Bethlehem, in the cave, He, the deliverer, the king of the ages. Verily He fled before the face of Herod, He, who is Himself the place whither we must flee, Himself the judge. . . . He, the right hand of the Lord, the Word of the Father, endless power from His Father’s side. . . . On this day He came to the people of Egypt, and dwelt among them like a man : thus was fulfilled the word

* John Rylands Library, Manchester, Coptic MS. 434 (in Mr. Crum’s “ Catalogue,” f. 49 *verso*).

of the prophet which he spoke concerning the Master. Mary, the pure, the wringing fleece,* to-day brought the Holy One to Egypt ; the idols fell, the devils fled before the face of the true God, the Son of the Father. . . . O Saviour of the world, God, lover of men, have mercy on Thy people and heal all their ills ; have mercy upon me, weakling that I am, and show pity upon me in the day of judgment."

Hymns such as this, though supplanted for purposes of private devotion by similar compositions in Arabic, are still in use in church services in Egypt. Two editions of the "Theotokia" have been printed in Cairo within the last five years by Claudius Labib Bey, who is one of the modern Copts most learned in his country's literature. But the number now used is a very small proportion of all that exist.

Here my rapid conspectus of the native literature of Christian Egypt must end. I am fully aware that it is not an exciting subject. It is not merely that I have run through the productions of a thousand years in half-an-hour, but it must be at once admitted that their literary merit is either of the very smallest or else altogether non-existent. I only claim your interest on the ground that the preservation by the Copts of their language and literature (incomplete as that preservation has been) is worthy of sympathy, seeing that it has been carried out in circumstances of great difficulty—a steady pressure, sometimes amounting to serious persecution, to force them to adopt Islam and Arabie ; and that these remains, however poor, are actual and living relies of the oldest and most venerable language of the world.

* Gideon's fleece, a constant type of the Virgin.

GEORGE CRABBE.

BY THE REV. CANON F. J. FOAKES-JACKSON, D.D., F.R.S.L.

[Read May 27th, 1914.]

I HAVE chosen the subject of George Crabbe, the Suffolk poet, partly out of attachment to the county of my birth, but also because I have certain faint, though undoubted family links in connection with him. In addition to this, his character as a man as well as a poet has a certain attraction to me; and even though there has been a revival of interest in him, comparatively few have studied him, or are acquainted with the facts of his life. Crabbe, however, was singularly fortunate in having a son possessed of many valuable qualities as a biographer, for not only was he affectionate and extraordinarily proud of his father, but at the same time he was blind to his defects neither as a man nor as a writer. And it must be remembered that Crabbe at his death occupied a place in public estimation, together with Scott and Byron; that the latter had described him as Nature's sternest painter and the best, and had written of him, "Crabbe, the first of living poets." A son, therefore, who under such circumstances could refrain from indiscriminating eulogy of a beloved father just dead must be a man to be trusted.

George Crabbe was born in 1754 at Aldeburgh, a somewhat squalid little fishing town on the coast of

Suffolk, rejoicing, however, in the dignity of a corporation returning two members to Parliament. His father was saltmaster and a sort of general *factotum* of the borough, a man, to all appearances, of rough manners, not improved by unfortunate circumstances ; but not unintelligent and able to recognise that in George he had a son who would repay a good education.* Not that with his narrow means he could do much ; but he certainly did his best, and more than could be expected. George was intended for the medical profession ; and it may be of interest to hear how a boy was educated to be a doctor in the eighteenth century. Young Crabbe was sent to school at Bungay, where he remained till his eleventh or twelfth year. He was next sent to a Mr. Richard Haddon, at Stowmarket, and showed considerable aptitude for mathematics, in which his father was also proficient. His master, to quote the biography, “ though neither a Porson nor a Parr, laid the foundations of a fair classical education also.” But he soon had to return home and had to work in the warehouse of Slaughden Quay, piling up butter and cheese, duties which the poor boy—he was but thirteen, and was of a dreamy, meditative temperament—bitterly resented. But his father had not forgotten that George was to be a doctor, and seeing an advertisement, “ Apprentice Wanted,” he sent him to Wickham Brook, near Bury St. Edmunds. There he was treated as a mere drudge, slept with the ploughboy, worked on the

* One cannot fail to recall Horace’s generous acknowledgment of the liberality of his father, “macro pauper agello,” in sending him to Rome to be educated. *Sat. Ivi*, 71.

farm, and learned his profession apparently by delivering medicine bottles to the neighbouring villages. In 1771 he removed to Woodbridge as apprentice to a Mr. Page, where he pursued his studies under more favourable circumstances. Here it was he met his future bride, Miss Elmy, at the neighbouring village of Parham, won a prize poem in the "Lady's Magazine," owned by a Mr. Wheble, on the subject of "Hope"; and later he published at Ipswich a poem entitled "Inebriety," in the preface of which he apologises "for those parts wherein I have taken such great liberties with Mr. Pope." And it was certainly to Pope that Crabbe owed his inspiration. Now to imitate Pope's versification is easy, and to copy his mannerisms not impossible; but to gain a double portion of his spirit, to emulate his epigrammatic terseness, above all to acquire anything like his knowledge of life and human nature can only be done by a man who is even in a measure akin to him in genius. Whether Crabbe was, it must be our endeavour to decide.

"Inebriety" did not catch on in Suffolk, a land which bears the epithet "silly" in two senses. I prefer the one which alludes to its numerous churches "selig," or pious. At any rate, no young author could expect an appreciative audience of clerics when he wrote thus :

"Lo proud Flaminius at the splendid board,
The easy chaplain of an atheist lord,
Quaffs the bright juice with all the gust of sense
And clouds his brain in torpid elegance."

Crabbe completed his apprenticeship in 1775 and

once more returned to Aldeburgh. His family circumstances were extremely distressed, his father had changed for the worse, and his mother's health had broken down. Again he was compelled to act as a warehouseman at Slaughden Quay. He managed to get to London for a short time, nominally to walk the hospitals, but having no funds he had, as he expresses it, to "pick up a little surgical knowledge as cheap as he could." After ten months' privation, Crabbe returned to Aldeburgh to become the assistant of a surgeon-apothecary, named Maskill,* who had opened a shop in the borough, and on his retirement Crabbe, though "imperfectly grounded in the commonest details of his profession," set up for himself. His medical career was a complete failure. He had not the requisite knowledge and lacked means to acquire it, nor was he able to adapt himself to the rough surroundings in which he lived. Aldeburgh was peopled, to quote his own words, by—

"A wild amphibious race
With sullen woe expressed on every face,
Who far from civil acts and social fly,
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye."

Sneered at as a poor and useless scholar by the relatives of Miss Elmy, to whom he was now engaged, regarded as a failure by his rough but not ungenerous father, Crabbe's life was far from happy, and the only relaxation he found was in the study of botany and the only encouragement in the society of the

* In the 'Life' by his son it is implied that Crabbe was Maskill's assistant; but this is denied in Huchon's 'George Crabbe and his Times,' p. 63.

officers of the Warwickshire militia, who were for a time quartered in the town. Their colonel, General Conway, showed the young surgeon attention, and gave him some valuable Latin books on botany. At last, wearied and disgusted with his life, Crabbe gave up attempting to be a doctor; and, aided by a loan of five pounds from Mr. Dudley North, brother to the candidate for the borough, he made his way to London in 1780 as a literary adventurer.*

The early struggles of a man who has won literary fame are only of importance in so far as they affect his subsequent work. Crabbe's intellect was essentially scientific rather than imaginative. His poetry is, like Dutch art, remarkable for the finish of details and from the exactness of observation. It is the same when he depicts what he saw as when he describes emotions and feelings. He had to understand before he could write. His hobby, as we have seen, was botany: he first showed talent as a mathematician; nor, because he failed in his medical work, need we suppose that his want of success was due in any way to intellectual deficiencies. Place Crabbe in a different situation. Suppose him to have walked the hospitals of London or Edinburgh, and to have made his way as a physician. He might well have taken an honoured place among the scientific men of his age. But look at the facts. His training was hardly better than that of a shop-boy in a modern chemist's in the most remote village

* So the 'Life.' Huchon points out that his name at this time was Long, and that he subsequently assumed the name of North. Crabbe went to London on the *Unity* smack, the property of my great-great-uncle, Robinson Groome, father of Archdeacon Groome, the intimate friend of E. Fitzgerald. Huchon, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

nowadays. This, for example, was the hospital which Crabbe had walked :

“ Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters form the sloping sides ;
* * *

Here on a matted flock, with dust o’erspread,
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head.
* * *

But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof, and echoes round the walls,
* * *

Anon a fignre enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit.
* * *

A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills ;
Whose murderous hand a drowsy Bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.”*

We see the influence of Pope in the versification ; but of personal experience in the subject.

True, Crabbe detested his profession, and thus apostrophises medical books as—

“ Ye frigid tribe, on whom I wasted long
The tedious hours, and ne’er indulged in song ;
Ye first seducers of my easy heart,
Who promised knowledge ye could not impart.”

But for all this, when in later life as a clergyman he used to prescribe for his poorer parishioners, he seems to have shown a power of diagnosis which made it evident that though he failed as a surgeon apothecary he might have succeeded as a consulting physician had he had the requisite education.†

* “The Village.”

† In the ‘Life’ Crabbe is said to have prescribed for his parishioners at Muston with great success.

Because he took Holy Orders and won his fame as a poet, as a clergyman Crabbe's experiences, on which he founded his rhymed tales—for such his poems really are—are considered to have been mainly clerical. But to understand him aright we must remember that he was more or less engaged in the practice of medicine from the age of fourteen to that of twenty-five. It would be easy to quote many lines wherein the doctor and not the parson is revealed, and he never lost the professional dislike of quacks or contempt of valetudinarians.

Let us now consider how Crabbe's experiences of Aldeburgh appear in his poems. I will take most of my extracts from his early poem, "The Village," but a few will be from "The Borough," which did not appear till more than twenty years later.

In "The Village" Crabbe boldly asks :

"From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way?"

and declines to follow the fashion of speaking of rural life as the height of felicity. He says :

"I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms ;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place.

* * *

Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride ?"

In this spirit he describes the barren coast of East Suffolk, not then the haunt of the holiday-

maker and the golfer, but the battle-ground of the smuggler and the preventive men, the home of—

“A bold and artful, surly, savage race,
Who only shelled to take the finny tribe,
The yearly dinner, or septennial bribe;
Wait on the shore, and, as the waves run high
On the tossed vessel bend their eager eye,
Which to the coast directs its venturous way,
Theirs, or the ocean’s miserable prey.”

This description of the barren land about the coast well illustrates Crabbe’s power of observation:

“Lo, where the heath with withering brake grown o’er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor ;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither’d ears ;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o’er the land, and rob the blighted rye ;
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war ;
There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil ;
Here the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil ;
Hardy and high above the slender sheaf,
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf ;
O’er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade ;
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
And a sad splendour vainly shines around.”

We have already heard of the workhouse hospital and the “potent quack” who attended to the sick. Let us now listen to Crabbe’s description of the young clergyman who ministered to the afflicted of his village :

“A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday task,
As much as God or man can fairly ask ;
The rest he gives to loves and labours light,
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night.

* * *

A sportsman keen, he shouts through half the day,
And, skilled at whist, devotes the night to play.”

But I must reluctantly forbear to quote more from “The Village,” and ask you to turn your attention to two passages in “The Borough,” which show what sort of men lived in Crabbe’s native town, and also indicate the power our author has in depicting two very different sorts of men.

I will take Peter Grimes, the fisherman, first. Grimes was one of those human monsters who delight in cruelty, and the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, to its shame, furnished victims for its exercise in workhouse apprentices. The guardians of the overflowing workhouses of London were accustomed to get rid of their superfluous numbers by binding children as apprentices to masters who practically became the owners of the little victims they were paid to teach.

“Peter had heard there were in London then—
Still have their being !—workhouse-clearing men,
Who, undisturbed by feelings just or kind,
Would parish-boys to needy tradesmen bind ;
They in their want a trifling sum would take,
And toiling slaves of piteous orphans make.”*

* For this abominable system see Walpole, ‘History of England from 1815,’ vol. i, p. 163, and his quotations from Romilly and Yonge. Dickens, of course, alludes to the apprenticing of parish boys in ‘Oliver Twist.’

Grimes did several of these wretched boys to death by his cruelty, which was notorious in the borough, but the shocking thing was that nobody troubled to interfere.

“ None put the question : ‘ Peter, dost thou give
The boy his food ? What, man ! the lad must live ;
Consider, Peter, let the child have bread,
He’ll serve thee better if he’s stroked and fed.’
None reasoned thus ; and some, on hearing cries,
Said calmly, ‘ Grimes is at his exercise.’ ”

At last Grimes, who seems to have been never quite sane in his brutality, went mad, and died raving at visions of his aged father and the boys he had put to death.

More inviting is a picture of another fisherman, the mayor of the borough :

“ He was a fisher from his earliest day,
And placed his nets within the borough bay,
Where, by his skates, his herrings, and his soles,
He lived, nor dreamed of corporation doles.”

At last he saved £240, and asked a friend what to do with it. The friend suggests “ put it out on interest.”

“ ‘ Oh, but,’ said Daniel, ‘ that’s a dangerous plan,
He may be robbed like any other man.’ ”

The friend tells Daniel that he will be paid five per cent. every year.

“ ‘ What good is that ? ’ quoth Daniel, ‘ for ’tis plain
If part I take, there can but part remain.’ ”

With great difficulty the principle of a mortgage is explained, and at last,

“ Much amazed was that good man. ‘Indeed,’
Said he, with gladdening eye, ‘will money breed ?
How have I lived ? I grieve with all my heart
For my late knowledge of this precious art ;
Five pounds for every hundred will he give ?
And then the hundred—I begin to live.”

Such was the simplicity of the good folk of Aldeburgh, and so little news of the great world reached the place that, when Crabbe, at the age of twenty-five or six, went to London in 1780, he had never heard of the genius and tragic fate of Chatterton.

I shall pass over the terrible year our aspirant for fame spent in the Metropolis. It is a matter of personal pride to me to quote the following passage from the ‘Life’ :

“ The only acquaintance he had on entering London was a Mrs. Burcham, who had been in early youth a friend of Miss Elmy’s, and who was now the wife of a linen-draper in Cornhill. This worthy woman and her husband received him with cordial kindness ; then invited him to make their house his home whenever he chose ; and as often as he availed himself of this invitation he was treated with that frank familiarity which cancels the appearance of obligation.” (*Life*, by the Rev. G. Crabbe.)

I am glad to think my great grand-parents understood the duty of hospitality.

At last, after a terrible struggle with poverty and the unsuccessful publication of a poem called “The Candidate,” Crabbe, who had hitherto sought for a patron in vain, found one in Edmund Burke. It is said that the following lines, expressive of the writer’s feelings on quitting Aldeburgh, satisfied Burke that his petitioner was a poet :

“ As on their neighbouring beach the swallows stand,
And wait for favouring winds to leave the land,
While still for flight the ready wing is spread,
So waited I the favouring hour, and fled ;
Fled from those shores where guilt and famine reign,
And cried, ‘ Ah ! hapless they who still remain,
Who still remain to hear the ocean roar,
Whose greedy waves devour the lessening shore ;
Till some fierce tide, with more imperious sway,
Sweeps the low hut and all it holds away ;
When the sad tenant weeps from door to door,
And begs a poor protection from the poor.””

Burke selected two poems, “The Village” and “The Library” for publication. He introduced Crabbe to Fox, and also to Reynolds, who brought him to Dr. Johnson ; and when Burke heard that Crabbe desired to be ordained, he induced Dr. Yonge, Bishop of Norwich, to overlook his unacademic education, and to admit him to the ministry. Lord Thurlow, himself an East Anglian, had at first refused to receive Crabbe, but now treated him with much kindness, and gave him £100 ; so Crabbe returned to Aldeburgh a clergyman—a very different position from that which he had occupied on leaving—and was shortly summoned thence to be domestic chaplain to the Duke of Rutland, on the recommendation of his firm friend Mr. Burke. From Belvoir “The Village” was published, after it had been submitted to Burke and Johnson. Naturally Crabbe’s sentiments about rustic happiness and virtue accorded with the views of the worthy doctor, but it is pleasing to remark the kindness which made him in the height of his fame labour to improve the work of the younger poet. Very characteristic are Johnson’s corrections

of Crabbe's manuscript. Here is how Crabbe writes at the commencement of "The Village":

"In fairer scenes, where peaceful pleasures spring,
Tityrus the pride of Mantuan swains might sing:
But charmed by him, or smitten with his views,
Shall modern poets court the Mantuan muse ?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where fancy leads, or Virgil led the way ?"

From Johnson's hands little remains unchanged

"On Mincio's banks in Caesar's bounteons reign,
If Tityrus found the golden age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dreams prolong
Mechanick echoes of the Mantuan song ?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy leads the way ?"

I cannot feel very certain myself that the poet or his corrector got the concluding line right.

I must now pass somewhat hurriedly over a long period. In 1785 Crabbe published "The Newspaper," and for twenty-two years he settled down to his clerical duties and did not reappear as an author. He lived at Stathern and Muston in Leicestershire the happy, domestic life of a country clergyman, returning to Suffolk when his wife inherited a share in the estate of her uncle, Mr. Tovell, at Parham.

In 1807 Crabbe appeared once more as a poet with "The Parish Register," and from this time his fame was unquestioned. "The Borough" followed and then "The Tales." But I need not weary you with dates and details. A new generation arose to encourage Crabbe. His first poems had been hailed by Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Johnson, and Fox. His later by Scott, Byron, Lord Holland, and Rogers.

His last days were spent in comfort and comparative affluence at Trowbridge, to which he had been appointed by a later Duke of Rutland. In 1817 he was lionised in London, and in 1822 he paid his famous visit to Edinburgh and found Sir Walter Scott in the midst of that preposterous pageant in which the King and Sir William Curtis, Alderman of the City of London, delighted the Scottish nation by appearing at Holyrood tremendous in Stewart tartan, with claymore, philabeg, and other accessories of the garb of old Gaul. Scott, unwearied by his efforts to organise the King's visit, had time to welcome a brother poet, and it will be remembered that so delighted was he to greet one whose writings had so often occupied his attention that he sat down on the sacred glass out of which George IV had deigned to drink, with the natural result.* Crabbe lived on till February, 1832, passing away, full of years and honours, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

Crabbe's works are sufficient to fill seven volumes, and it is not possible to do more than endeavour to form an estimate of him by limiting oneself to a few topics. I must content myself with three, and I fear that even then I cannot do justice to these. Those I propose are :

- I. Crabbe as reflecting the manners of his age.
- II. As a delineator of character.
- III. His place as a poet.

I. I have spoken of Crabbe's scientific education —such as it was—and of his power of observation,

* Lockhart's 'Life of Scott,' Huchon points out several obvious discrepancies. 'George Crabbe,' etc., p. 435.

and I find, even in later life, more of the doctor than the parson. It is for this reason that his work is of more value than that of greater poets in reflecting his age. For Crabbe was not one of those who let "fancy lead the way," but dealt with sober realities of experience, and even refrained from generalising or theorising. For the religious life of the period Crabbe's poems are an invaluable document of which historians have, I suggest, made too little use. There is no reason to suppose that our author took Orders simply to secure literary leisure. His early diaries prove him a most devout man, and the fact that he occupied himself twenty-two years in parish work, without publishing, shows his devotion to his profession. Yet he apparently saw no harm in accepting two livings in Dorsetshire from the Lord Chancellor, which he scarcely ever went near, but took other work in the Vale of Belvoir. Nor did he feel any compunctions later in leaving his parishes in the Midlands to the care of a non-resident clergyman in order to live on his wife's property in Suffolk, and he evidently considered the then Duke of Rutland unduly slow in providing better for him. He was not always popular with his parishioners. This was not unnatural at Aldeburgh, where he had been known under less prosperous circumstances, but he met with a good deal of opposition when, after his long residence in Suffolk, he returned to Muston ; and at Trowbridge he was at first considered too worldly for his flock, and only slowly won their sincere respect. A strict moralist, he had no dislike of social pleasure, and as a staunch Whig he shrank from enthusiasm of every kind.

The serious and the profane alike distrusted him. The latter remonstrated at his description of the workhouse chaplain, to whom allusion has been made, and in deference to the complaints of the former the vigorous lines in “The Library” :

“Calvin grows gentle in this silent coast,
Nor finds a single heretic to roast,”

make way for a weaker couplet with a half line plagiarised from Dryden :

“Socinians here and Calvinists abide
And thin partitions angry chiefs divide.”

Let us consider the clergy and religious teachers generally as he describes them.

I can only allude to the five rectors, whom old Dibble, the parish clerk in the “Parish Register” remembered, “Good Master Addle,” who

“Filled the seven-fold surplice fairly out,”

and “dozing died.” “Parson Peele,” whose favourite text was “I will not spare you,” and with “piercing jokes, and he’d a plenteous store,” raised the tithes all round. Dr. “Grandspear” who never stinted his “nappy beer,” and whom even cool Dissenters wished and hoped that a man so kind, “away to heaven, though not their own, might find.” “The Author Rector”—

“Careless was he of surplice, hood and band,
And kindly took them as they came to hand.”

Lastly, the young man from Cambridge assailed in his youth by a “clamorous sect” who preached

“conviction” so violently that “our best sleepers started as they slept.”

But says old Dibble :

“Down he sank upon his wretched bed
And gloomy crotchets filled his wandering head.”

And it is on this point that Crabbe is so illuminating as to the spirit of his age. His difficulties as a clergyman were due rather to the fanaticism than to the indifference of his flock. In Sir Eustace Grey, a very powerful description of a madman who finds religious peace at last, the poet concludes,—

“But, Ah! though time could yield relief
And soften woes it cannot cure;
Would we not suffer pain and grief
To have our reason sound and sure?
Then let us keep our bosoms pure
Our fancies’ favourite flights suppress;
Prepare the body to endure,
And bend the mind to meet distress
And then His Guardian care implore,
Whom demons dread and men adore.”

As the doctor recommends a moderate and temperate life as the best preventive of disease, and distrusts strong remedies and universal panaceas, so Crabbe (true to the best medical tradition) regards the pastoral work of healing the soul. Tolerant in most respects, he is severe on what the eighteenth century styled “enthusiasm” and on sentimentalism in religion generally.

Thus, in “The Borough” we have in the letter on religious sects a description of the contempt the Calvinistic Methodists had for Church teaching :

“ Hark to the Churchman ; day by day he cries :
 Children of men, be virtuous, be wise,
 Seek patience, justice, temp’rance, meekness, truth,
 In age be courteous, be sedate in youth,—
 So they advise, and when such things be read,
 How can we wonder that their flocks are dead ? ”

This “cauld morality,” as Scott makes Mr. Trumbull call it in “Redgauntlet,” is contrasted with a really rousing sermon :

“ Further and further spread the conquering word
 As loud he cried—‘ the Battle of the Lord.’
 Ev’n those apart who were the sound denied,
 Fell down instinctive, and in spirit died.
 Nor stayed he yet—his eye, his frown, his speech
 His very gesture had a power to teach ;
 With outstretch’d arms, strong voice, and piercing call,
 He won the field and made the Dagons fall ;
 And thus in triumph took his glorious way,
 Through scenes of horror, terror, and dismay.”

Crabbe found his work often hindered by a sort of fatalistic quietism which gave no hope to the “unconverted,” even when they sought the aid of the minister of religion. In “Abel Keene” we have the story of a merchant’s clerk who abandoned his faith, and then in days of poverty came for help :

“ Said the good man, ‘and then rejoice therefore :
 ’Tis good to tremble: prospects then are fair
 When the lost soul is plunged in just despair.
 Once thou wert simply honest, just and pure,
 Whole as thou thought’st and never wish’d a cure :

* * *

‘ What must I do,’ I said, ‘ my soul to free ? ’
 ‘ Do nothing, man—it will be done for thee ’—

‘ But must I not, my reverend guide believe ?
If thou art call’d thou wilt the faith receive :—
But I repent not’—Angry he replied,
‘ If thou art call’d thou need’st naught beside
Attend on us, and if ’tis Heaven’s decree
The call will come—if not, ah, woe ! for thee.’”

Crabbe had very little toleration for spiritual valetudinarians. He liked a good practical Christianity and was a little inclined to class the over-scrupulous with the *malades imaginaires*. In “The Gentleman Farmer” we have a cleverly told story of a man of property, a professed atheist, and an avowed enemy of priests and doctors. But he fell ill, and his artful housekeeper, the meek Rebecca, produces a Scotch cousin, Dr. Mollet. He is so successful that Rebecca decides to allow the Rev. Mr. Whisp, a converted ostler, to advise her master. Mollet and Whisp between them point out that it is his duty to marry Rebecca. Then the three batten happily on their victim :

“ Mollet his body orders, Whisp his soul,
And o’er his purse the lady takes control.”

Though Crabbe lived in the days of the French Revolution and Tom Paine, infidelity seems to have given him far less trouble than the enthusiasm of his parishioners. In “The Learned Boy” we have the tale of a precocious lad such as our poet detested, a mean little creature, neat and docile at school, to whom much could be taught because he could imitate without reflecting :

“ He thought not much indeed—but what depends
On pains and care, was at his fingers’ ends.”

As it was impossible to make such a lad into a farmer like his honest father, he was sent to an office in town and picked up some up-to-date views of the Bible from a brother-clerk. On his return he thus explained his views to his grandmother, much to the dear old lady's distress :

“ I myself began
To feel disturbed and to my Bible ran ;
I now am wiser—yet agree in this,
The book has things that are not much amiss ;
It is a fine old work, and I protest
I hate to hear it treated as a jest ;
The book has wisdom in it, if you look
Wisely upon it as another book.”

The father, overhearing his hopeful son, treats him to a long discourse, driven home with a cart-whip, and concluding :

“ Teachers men honour, learners they allure ;
But learners teaching of contempt are sure ;
Scorn is their certain meed, and smart their only cure.”

I have dealt hitherto with the subject of religion as showing how Crabbe can be used to illustrate his age. For politics I may refer to the witty tale of “The Dumb Orators”; for social life to “Amusements in the Borough,” and to “Clelia” and “Blaney” in the same collection.

II. In the biography the son writes with much discrimination of his father’s genius :

“ Whatever truth there may be in these lines (from “The Learned Boy,” disparaging order), it is certain that this insensibility to the beauty of order was a defect in his own mind ; arising from what I must call his want of taste.

. . . This view of his mind is, I must add, confirmed by his remarkable indifference to almost all the proper objects of taste. He had no real love for painting, for music, for architecture, or for what a painter's eye considers as the beauties of a landscape. But he had a passion for science—the science of the human mind first—,” etc.

I believe that in delineation of character Crabbe is an artist indeed, worthy to rank with Jane Austen and the Brôntes, and perhaps even more subtle than these ladies. His character was not without cynicism, and his powers of critical observation were great. He draws the drunken old reprobate in “The Borough,” the magnificent ‘Sir Denys Brand,’ the gentle, suffering “Ellen Orford,” the University son in “Schools,” with masterly skill. I can only indicate his power in this respect by a few inadequate quotations.

The sketches of the characters in the almshouses in “The Borough” I commend to you as masterpieces. Clelia and Blaney had come down in life, and were without much excuse. They had been jobbed into the institution by Sir Denys Brand, and his words at the meeting of trustees throw a world of light on the baronet’s character. Of Blaney he says :

“ ‘ ‘Tis true,’ said he, ‘ the fellow’s quite a brute—
A very beast ; but yet, with all his sin,
He has a manner—let the devil in.’ ”

Of Clelia :

“ ‘ With all her faults,’ he said, ‘ the woman knew
How to distinguish—had a manner, too,
And, as they say, she is allied to some
In decent station—let the creature come.’ ”

But though these two are powerfully drawn, Crabbe expends more care and skill in depicting Benbow, who had been

“a jovial trader; men enjoyed
The night with him: the day was unemployed.”

Benbow, whenever he could find an audience, used to dilate on “The men of might to mingle strong drink,” whom he had known. There was Squire Asgill, whose manor house was a disgrace and scandal to the country-side. It is needless to particularise. I can explain best by saying that his life was that of Sir Pitt Crawley in his later days, only he was more hospitable and generous. Let us see the worthy squire at his best, in church :

“ His worship ever was a churleman true,
He held in scorn the methodistic crew;
May God defend the Church and save the King,
He’d pray devoutly and divinely sing.
Admit that he the holy day would spend
As priests approved not, still he was a friend;
Much then I blame the preacher as too nice
To call such trifles by the name of vice;
Hinting, though gently and with cautious speech,
Of good example—’tis their trade to preach.

* * *

A weaker man, had he been so reviled,
Had left the place—he only swore and smiled.”

A still greater hero of Benbow’s was Captain Dowling, who was ready to drink against any rival:

“ Man after man they from the trial shrank,
And Dowling ever was the last that drank.”

But we must leave the old reprobate, and go on to a far subtler delineation of character. In describing Sir Denys Brand, Crabbe admits maybe "somewhat too highly placed for an author, who seldom ventures above middle life to delineate." It is admitted that Sir Denys was a real person, and the biographer withholds his name out of consideration for his family.* It must be remembered that Crabbe's nature was both proud and sensitive, and the scathing satire he expends on Sir Denys was probably provoked by some real or fancied slight.

He is one of the trustees of the almshouses. He took the office—

"True 'twas beneath him ; but to do men good
Was motive never by his heart withstood."

Sir Denys is an aristocratical prig of the first water, and Crabbe hated prigs. He is one of those men who can be, with a certain amount of truth, described as possessing all the virtue :

"In him all merits were decreed to meet,
Sincere though cautious, frank and yet discreet,
Just all his dealings, faithful every word,
His passions' master and his temper's lord."

His benevolence was splendid, and known to all men :

"He left to meaner minds the simple deed,
By which the houseless rest, the hungry feed ;
His was a public bounty, vast and grand,
'Twas not in him to work with viewless hand.

* * *

* He is said to have been "Challoner Arcedekne, who built Glevering Hall," near Parham. Huchon, 'George Crabbe,' etc., p. 309.

He the first lifeboat plann'd ; to him the place
Is deep in debt—'twas he revived the race."

Yet nobody liked him—

" 'Twould give me joy [says Crabbe] some gracious deed
to meet

That has not called for glory in the street ;
Who felt for many, could not always shun,
In some soft moment to be kind to one ;
And yet they tell us, when Sir Denys died,
That not a widow in the borough cried."

III. Perhaps it may be said that the subject of my lecture was after all rather a common-place old gentleman, and if what I have read leaves this view, it is because I have failed to convey the effect which the study of his works has left upon me. He certainly made a great impression in his time, and was hailed as a true poet in an age of poets. Nor is an age always wrong when it acclaims a man in whom posterity sees little merit. To compare Crabbe with Byron as a poet would be as absurd as to place his little stories on a level with the romances of Scott, whether in prose or verse. But in his own time men rated him very highly, and this is the more remarkable because he was essentially a man of the eighteenth century, who achieved his reputation in the nineteenth. He saturated himself in Pope and Dryden, and the wits of a bygone age, and never conformed to the taste of his own. The romantic movement, much as he admired Scott's writings, never influenced Crabbe nor does he seem to have been affected by the Lake Poets. He was simply himself : simple-minded if sensitive, full of

courage, and with a quiet dignity of his own. Unworldly, yet remarkably shrewd, curiously blind to the beauties of Nature and of art, yet wonderfully alive to the marvels of the world and the pathos of life. Stern and uncompromising as a realist, he lacked neither sympathy nor imagination, and possessed a saving sense of descriptive humour. Lord Thurlow said of him, “He’s as like Parson Adams as twelve to a dozen by G—d,” and he has much of the winning simplicity of Feilding’s charming clerical creation. And yet he had the elevation of character and the genius with fearless hand to take the veil which hid the lives of the poor from their richer neighbours, to expose the cruelty, injustice, and rapacity of an age, which for all its greatness was singularly callous and unsympathetic of weakness and suffering; and Crabbe may take his place not only with the poets of his time, but with the Clarksons, the Howards, the Frys, and the good men and women who succeeded in inaugurating an era of practical humanity. We need not grudge him the generous commendation of the greatest among his contemporary poets—

“Nature’s sternest painter and her best.”

GEORGE MEREDITH, FRANCE, AND THE FRENCH.

BY DR. W. G. HARTOG, M.A., F.R.S.L.

[Read February 24th, 1914.]

IN the many essays and writings that deal with various phases of Meredith's genius, the attitude of our great novelist and poet towards France and the French has met but with scant attention. A brief survey of this aspect of Meredith's work may shed a new light on the man himself, and lead to a fuller appreciation of his mental outlook and philosophy.

It was not till his thirty-fifth year that Meredith visited France. In 1863 he accompanied Sir William Hardman on a journey to Rouen and Paris, and Sir William has left us a pleasant account of their wanderings. He writes of their nocturnal rambles in the Champs-Elysées, their dainty suppers at Véfour's, and their visit to Versailles.

Meredith left Sir William in Paris, and went on to Grenoble and thence to Chamounix. That this first visit to France bore fruit is evident, for his poem, "A Faith on Trial," begins with a passage describing the lovely scenery of Normandy, through which he passed. We may also take it for granted that the gaiety and brightness of Paris and the Parisians produced their effect on a mind so impressionable, and so willing to be charmed.

Meredith re-visited France at various times, and in his later life, when paralysis prevented his leaving his home at Box Hill, he had ever a cordial welcome for any French men or women of letters who came to see him in his hermitage at Flint Cottage. Alphonse Daudet went there, and so did Madame Daudet. We have some very delightful letters in Meredithian French which he wrote to them. Marcel Schwob relates his pilgrimage to Box Hill in his *Spicilège* (1894). And quite recently, in 1908, M. Constantin Photiadès, a young Frenchman of Greek extraction, called on Meredith, and in his book¹ gives a delightful account of how he was received. Meredith told his guest of his own veneration for France, and of his love for her great painters—Watteau, Latour, Chardin, Fragonard—and Corot, whom he

(1) *George Meredith. Sa vie—son imagination—son art—sa doctrine.*
(Armand Colin.) Paris, 1910.

loved best of all. From an interesting comparison between Corot and Turner, to the disadvantage of his own countryman, the novelist went on to speak of the Orleans princes whom he had met during their exile in England. He thought highly of the qualities of the Duc de Nemours and the Prince de Joinville, but he held a low opinion of the intelligence of the Comte de Paris. It seems that one day, when the Comte was taking the novelist into his confidence, he spoke of some reform that he intended to carry out, when once established on the throne of his fathers. Meredith uttered a mental but pious wish that he might never succeed in sitting thereon! "France, that imperious thoroughbred," said he to his guest, "needs a gallanter horseman."

M. Photiadès found Meredith reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and elicited from him that he greatly admired the later works of Anatole France. "Excellent books," he remarked, "that I read over and over again." He fully approved of Anatole France's attitude towards the Dreyfus case, and added: "If I had been a younger man, I should certainly have written something about this moving drama."

Then Meredith told M. Photiadès how greatly he had enjoyed seeing at his own house Alphonse Daudet, "a man as brilliant and as attractive as his books," and Clemenceau, whom he termed an "indefatigable wrestler." He spoke in terms of high praise of Gobineau's dialogues on the Renaissance, and went on to say how his own thoughts were for ever turning to France. "If I could make the journey to Paris," he added, "I should settle down in the Champs-Elysées, and revisit with joy the Louvre and the Bois de Boulogne. . . . Is not Paris dishonoured by the smell and din of motor-cars and motor-buses, I adore the speed of an automobile, but how infamous are the dust, the smoke, and the nauseating stench!" Meredith added that the South of France attracted him greatly, and said that he had studied the difficult Provençal dialect, on purpose to be able to read Mistral in the original. Indeed, in *A Reading of Life* he translated into English verse some few stanzas of the great poet of Provence.

Finally, Meredith bewailed the fact that he had only devoted to France his *Odes in Contribution*, and he read aloud the opening lines of the "Ode to Napoleon," his own favourite.

The last words of this interview show how deeply Meredith admired France. Throwing aside his volume of the Odes from which he had been reading, he cried in French : "Je brûle de servir la France, je vous le jure ! Malheureusement, nous autres Anglais, nous ne pouvons plus rien pour vous, parce que nous avons perdu votre confiance . . . 'La Perfide Albion !' voilà comment vous nommez ma patrie ! . . . C'est injuste. . . . Je me demande parfois quelle fut l'origine de votre défiance. N'est-ce pas ce traître et brutal incendie de la flotte danoise par Nelson? . . . "

M. Photiadès discreetly refrained from answering this question, and departed, evidently bearing with him a more than pleasant impression of his interview with the great novelist. One is disinclined, and rightly so, I think, to give too much credence to the *ex parte* statements of interviewers, even if they be literary men. They so often hear what they have come to hear, and see what they want to see. But every word that M. Photiadès says in his book is borne out by Meredith himself in his writings. Not even the casual reader of Meredith, if such a being exist, can fail to note his frequent references to France and the French ; and those who look deeper into his works must inevitably be struck by Meredith's attitude towards our great neighbour. To my mind, he sometimes regards her as a man and a lover regards an adored and beautiful mistress, with love and worship. These, however, do not altogether blind him to her weaknesses and faults. At other times he looks upon France as typifying the Mother among the Nations. He calls her, indeed, in his poems : Mother of Heroes, Mother of Pride, Mother of Delicacy, Mother of Glory, Mother of Reason, and Mother of Many Laughters ; and it is for her shattered motherhood, as we shall see later, that he pours forth his most impassioned verse.

Let us first consider Meredith's feelings towards France and the French, as shown in his prose works. As early as in February, 1868, he reviewed in the FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW the *Countess of Brownlow's Reminiscences from 1802-1815*. The Countess, who was in Paris with Lady Castlereagh, was not favourably impressed by Frenchwomen or their manners, and is at no pains to conceal her feelings on the subject. These two English ladies received a visit of ceremony from the Duchess de Courlande and her

daughter, Madame de Périgord. The latter is described as highly rouged and dressed in pink with roses on her head. This is all the more shocking as Mme. de Périgord was in mourning for the death of her daughter. The Countess jumps to the conclusion that these ladies are no better than they should be, and remarks that people in diplomatic circles never know whom they may be expected to meet.

Meredith is quick to defend the French and their manners : "French ladies," he said, "do not like sorrow to persevere and show itself. . . . There are times, they think, for all things, and a time for wearing the livery of grief in public . . . Madame de Périgord was simply fulfilling what she conceived to be a public duty. She had to pay a visit and she did not choose—for it is not the habit of the country—to affect the eyes of others by presenting herself sombrely clad. Frenchwomen are, to say the least, as tender-hearted mothers as Englishwomen. She may have been *bien triste* for the loss of the child, in spite of her rouge; nay, coming of a provident race, she may even on that occasion have thought it advisable to lay on an extra dab of artificial bloom, not supposing that she violated the laws of decency, but supposing quite the reverse. Why should she wear a suffering heart on her sleeve? Frenchwomen hold our English obtrusion of heavy mourning into society to be an offence, a selfish insistence on a private grief, evincing absolute want of consideration for others; in short, a piece of our national bad breeding. . . . They are not of a temper to nurse their grief in secret, and it is a principle of taste with them to decline to abstract attention as black dots, and be out of harmony with the scenes they visit."

The whole article, of which this is a brief extract, rings with Meredith's ardent championship of the French, and is, so far as we know, the first expression in his works of his admiration for that nation. He is ever-ready to take up arms on behalf of France, though he sometimes permits himself to indulge in criticism of a kindly nature. We have an instance of this in *Rhoda Fleming*,¹ where he gives an exceedingly keen analysis of French character in his portrayal of Mrs. Peggy Lovell :—

"‘France,’ Edward called her in one of their colloquies. It

(1) *Rhoda Fleming*, Chap. XXII.

was an illuminating title. She liked the French (though no one was keener for the honour of her own country in opposition to them); she liked their splendid boyishness, their unequalled devotion, their merciless intellects: the oneness of the nation when the sword is bare and pointing to chivalrous enterprise. She liked their fine varnish of sentiment, which appears so much on the surface that Englishmen suppose it to have nowhere any depth: as if the outer coating must necessarily exhaust the stock, or as if what is at the source of our being can never be made visible. She had her imagination of them as of a streaming banner in the jaws of a storm, with snows amid the cloud-rents and lightning in the chasms:—which image may be accounted for by the fact that when a girl she had in adoration kissed the feet of Napoleon, the giant of the later ghosts of history."

Meredith also makes Alvan, in *The Tragic Comedians*,¹ call his adored Clotilde "Lutèce" and "my bright Lutetia," and this is how Alvan justifies his choice of a pet-name for Clotilde:—

"Alvan shaped a comparison of her with Paris, his beloved of cities—the symbolised goddess of the lightning brain that is quick to conceive, eager to realise ideas, impassioned for her hero, but ever putting him to the proof, peaceful beyond all rhyme, colloquial as never the Muse; light in light hands, yet valiant unto death for a principle; and therefore not light in strong hands, very steadfast rather; and oh! constantly entertaining."

The antitheses and contrasts that Meredith saw so clearly in the French character, their love of paradox, their wit and their vitality made a strong appeal to him. In *One of our Conquerors*,² written late in his career, he tells us how the French have avoided "the malady of sameness, our modern malady." "They are," he says, "the most mixed of any European nation, so they are packed with contrasts; they are full of sentiment; they are sharply logical, free-thinkers, devotees, affectionate, ferocious, frivolous, tenacious; the passion of the season operating like sun and moon on their qualities; and they can reach to ideality out of sensualism. Below your level, they are above it; a paradox is at home with them."

Meredith does not limit his admiration for the French to their manners and character, but he scattered remarks on their literary

(1) *The Tragic Comedians*, Chap. VIII. (2) *One of our Conquerors*, Chap. X.

gifts throughout all his writings. Here is one of his most striking appreciations from *Sandra Belloni*,¹ when Cornelia has been criticising Tracy Runningbrook as a novelist, on the ground that "he coins words," Mr. Barrett replies :—"A writer who is not servile and has insight must coin from his own mint. In poetry we are rich enough; but in prose also we owe everything to the license our poets have taken in the teeth of their critics. Shall I give examples? It is not necessary. Our simplest prose style is nearer to poetry with us, for this reason, that the poets have made it. Read French poetry. With the first couplet the sails are full, and you have left the shores of prose far behind. Mr. Runningbrook coins words and risks expressions because an imaginative Englishman, pen in hand, is the cadet and vagabond of the family—an exploring adventurer; whereas to a Frenchman it all comes inherited like a well-filled purse. The audacity of the French mind, and the French habit of quick social intercourse, have made them nationally far richer in language. Let me add, individually as much poorer. Read their stereotyped descriptions. They all say the same things. They have one big Gallic trumpet. Wonderfully eloquent: we feel that: but the person does not speak."

For Meredith's most direct eulogy of France as a literary nation we must turn to his *Essay on Comedy*, which contains references to several great French men of letters, and especially to Molière, of whom he says: "Molière's wit is like a running brook, with innumerable fresh lights on it, at every turn of the wood, through which its business is to find a way. It does not run in search of obstructions, to be noisy over them; but when dead leaves and viler substances are heaped along its course, its natural song is heightened. Without effort, and with no dazzling flashes of achievement, it is full of healing, the wit of good breeding, the wit of wisdom."²

This is but one instance. The Essay devotes a considerable amount of space to the praise of Molière, for whom Meredith's admiration is easily understood. For these two great writers of comedy, though belonging to different nations, have, I think,

(1) *Sandra Belloni*, Chap. VIII.

(2) *An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit*. Constable, London, 1897, p. 36.

many points in common. They have the same kind of insight into the inwardness of society. They have a similar way of setting forth the weakness and vanity of mankind in an urbane and polished form. In a word, Meredith has much the same conception of the Comic Spirit that Molière had before him.

Meredith was not satisfied with scattering appreciative references to France, to her people and her literature throughout the pages of his works. His most whole-hearted tribute to France was his choice of Renée for his chiefest heroine of *Beauchamp's Career*. He boldly proclaimed Renée de Croisnel as his favourite among his women, and charming indeed she is. In his old age Meredith is credited with having said of her: "Is she not a delicious creature? I think that I am even now a little in love with her."

This is how he sees Renée:—

"A brunette of the fine lineaments of the good blood of France. She chattered snatches of Venetian caught from the gondoliers: she was like a delicate cup of crystal brimming with the beauty of the place, and making one of them drink in all his impressions through her. Her features had the soft irregularities which run to rarities of beauty as the ripple rocks the light; mouth, eyes, brows, nostrils, and the blooming cheeks played into one another liquidly; thought flew, tongue followed, and the flash of meaning quivered over them like night-lightning. Or oftener, to speak the truth, tongue flew, thought followed: her age was but newly seventeen, and she was French."¹

On a comparison with his English beauty, Cecilia Halkett, Renée emerges triumphant: "Cecilia was a more beautiful woman than Renée: but on which does the eye linger longest, which draws the heart?—a radiant landscape, where the tall, ripe wheat flashes between shadow and shine in the stately march of summer, or the peep into dewy woodland on to dark water?"²

And indeed Renée irradiates warmth and light over a story which, were it not for her presence, would be somewhat cold and dull. Meredith himself seems to be indignant with his hero, when this ravishing Renée, unhappily married, throwing off the yoke, offers herself to Nevil Beauchamp, and is refused by the cold-blooded Englishman.

(1) *Beauchamp's Career*, Chap. IV.

(2) *Ibid.*, Chap. XXXIV.

"So firm has been her faith in him, that her visions of him on the passage to England had resolved all to one flash of blood-warm welcome awaiting her : and it says much for her natural generosity that the savage delicacy of a woman placed as she now was, did not take a mortal hurt from the apparent voidness of this home of his bosom. The passionate gladness of the lover was wanting ; the chivalrous valiancy of manful joy."¹

It is in *Beauchamp's Career* that Meredith takes the opportunity to give his views on the French *mariage de convenance*. Renée has been affianced to a French Marquis, a jovial nobleman of fifty. Nevil Beauchamp tells her brother Roland that he considers this to be a terrible state of things ; and this is Roland's explanation and reply :—

"It is the mania with us, my dear Nevil, to marry our girls young to established men. . . . Two furious matchmakers—our country, beautiful France, abounds in them—met one day ; they were a comtesse and a baronne, and they settled the alliance. The bell was rung, and Renée came out of school. There is this to be said : she has no mother ; the sooner a girl without a mother has a husband the better. That we are all agreed upon. I have no personal objection to the marquis ; he has never been in any great scandals . . . he is hospitable, luxurious. Renée will have a fine hôtel in Paris. But I am eccentric : I have read in our old Fabliaux of December and May. Say the Marquis is November, say October ; he is still some distance from the plump spring month. And we in our family have wits and passions. In fine, a bud of a rose in an old gentleman's buttonhole ! it is a challenge to the whole world of youth ; and if the bud should leap ? Enough of this matter, friend Nevil ; but sometimes a friend must allow himself to be bothered. I have perfect confidence in my sister, you see. I simply protest against her being exposed to . . . you know men. I protest, that is, in the privacy of my cigar-case, for I have no chance elsewhere. The affair is on wheels. The very respectable matchmakers have kindled the marquis on the one hand, and my father on the other, and Renée passes obediently from the latter to the former. In India they sacrifice the widows, in France the virgins."²

And, as we know, the bud did leap. Beauchamp, however,

(1) *Beauchamp's Career*, Chap. XL.

(2) *Ibid.*, Chap. VII.

declined to take and wear the fragrant flower. But we are concerned here with the fact that Meredith condemned the system that allowed this fair young creature to have been "ticketed the property of a middle-aged man, a worn-out French Marquis, whom she had agreed to marry unwooed, without love—the creature of a transaction."

Later on we are given further instances of Meredith's insight into French character. Beauchamp has volunteered the fact that in England we have no duelling. He indulges in an attack on two things that are essentially French : the practice of duelling and the shrug of the shoulders. This is how Meredith puts it :—

"He attacked the practice of duelling and next the shrug, wherewith M. Livret and M. d'Orbec sought at first to defend the foul custom or apologise for it, or plead for it philosophically, or altogether cast it off their shoulders ; for the literal interpretation of the shrug in argument is beyond human capacity : it is the point of speech beyond our treasury of language. He attacked the shrug, as he thought, very temperately ; but in controlling his native vehemence he grew, perforce of repression and of incompetency to deliver himself copiously in French, sarcastic."

Naturally, Beauchamp got into trouble, "he provoked the lash." "For in the first place, a beautiful woman's apparent favourite should be particularly discreet in all that he says ; and next he should have known that the Gallic shrug over matters political is volcanic—it is the heaving of the mountain, and like the proverbial Russ, leaps up Tartarly at a scratch. Our newspapers also had been flea-biting M. Livret and his countrymen of late ; and to conclude, over in old England you may fly out against what you will, and there is little beyond a motherly smile, a nurse's rebuke, or a fool's rudeness to answer you. In quick-blooded France you have whip for whip, sneer, sarcasm, claw, fang, tussle in a trice ; and if you choose to comport yourself according to your insular notion of freedom, you are bound to march out to the measured ground at an invitation. To begin by saying that your principles are opposed to it naturally excites a malicious propensity to try your temper."

All this, as you see, is delightful satire, and on the whole the Englishman cuts rather a sorry figure. Meredith having said

his say about duelling and the shrug, goes on to rally the French in playful tones for their gallantry and their well-known weakness for frailty in pretty women.

M. Livret is speaking now on a subject that was peculiarly dear to him. The celebrated Château Dianet was about to be visited by Renée's guests. "M. Livret," says Meredith, "in common with some French philosophers and British matrons, cherished a sentimental, sad enthusiasm for royal concubines; and when dilating upon one of them . . . Agnès, who was really a kindly soul, though not virtuous," Beauchamp annoyed M. Livret by asking him priggish questions as to the condition of the people, the peasantry who were sweated with taxes to support these lovely frailties. These came oddly from a man in the fire of youth, and the little old gentleman, somewhat seduced by the melting image of his theme, might well ask, "Of what flesh are you then?" His historic harem was insulted. Personally, too, the fair creature picturesquely soiled, intrepid in her amorousness, and ultimately absolved by repentance, cried to him to champion her. Excited by the supposed critical mind in Beauchamp. M. Livret painted and painted his lady, tricked her in casuistical niceties, scenes of pomp and boudoir pathos, with many shifting side-lights and a risky word or two, until Renée cried out : "Spare us the *esprit Gaulois*, M. Livret."

This gave M. Livret a splendid opportunity, of which he took full advantage. "The *esprit Gaulois* is the sparkle of crystal common sense, Madame, and may we never abandon it for a Puritanism that hides its face to conceal its filthiness, like a stagnant pond."

To which Renée replied : "It seems, then, that there are two ways of being objectionable." But M. Livret had the last word : "Ah ! Mme. la Marquise, your wit is French, keep your heart so !"

And finally, let us hear what M. Livret has to say on the subject of the French woman : "Name the two countries which alone have produced *the* woman, the ideal woman, the woman of art, whose beauty, grace, and wit offer her to our contemplation in an atmosphere above the ordinary conditions of the world : these two countries are France and Greece ! None other give you the perfect woman, the woman who conquers time, as she conquers men, by virtue of the divinity in her blood ; and she,

as little as illustrious heroes, is to be judged by the laws and standards of lesser creatures. In fashioning her, nature and art have worked together; in her, poetry walks the earth. The question of good or bad is entirely to be put aside: it is a rustic's impertinence—a bourgeois vulgarity. She is pre-eminent, *voilà tout*. Has she grace and beauty? Then you are answered: such possessions are an assurance that her influence in the aggregate must be for good. Thunder, destructive to insects, refreshes earth. So she." So sang M. Livret the rhapsodist. Possibly a scholarly little French gentleman, going down the grey slopes of sixty to second childishness, recovers a second juvenility in these enthusiasms; though what it is that inspires our matrons to take up with them is unimaginable.

These extracts from *Beauchamp's Career* show us very clearly Meredith's feelings and views. You notice that while he is gently satirising some of the French failings, such as their combative ness, their proneness to gesticulation, their gallantry, and the *esprit Gaulois* which now and then runs to coarseness, he nevertheless has a shrewd hit at English priggishness and Puritanical hypocrisy, and on two occasions indulges in a keen thrust at that time-honoured institution—the British matron.

So we see that there is hardly a phase of French life, a trait of French character, a single French virtue, that goes by unappreciated or unobserved by Meredith. Very gentle is he to the weaknesses of France, and very keen in his admiration of her qualities. So keen indeed is he that he makes his own countrymen and women suffer by the comparison. Even where he criticises a French institution, such as the *mariage de convenience*, he gives us the French point of view, so that we may see that there exist arguments in its favour. One may even say that at times Meredith was so carried away by his enthusiasm for the French that he lost sight of the crude, hard facts. Here is a passage from *One of our Conquerors*, which well illustrates this. Daniel Skepsey arrives at the town of Dreux:—

"He handed his card to the station-master. A glance and the latter signalled to a porter, saying, 'Paradis': and the porter laid hold of Skepsey's bag. Skepsey's grasp was firm. He pulled and the porter pulled. Skepsey had explanatory speech accompanying a wrench. He wrenched back with vigour, and in his

own tongue explained that he held to the bag because his master's letters were in the bag, all the way from England. For a minute there was a downright trial of muscle and will; the porter appeared furiously excited. Skepsey had a look of cooled steel. Then the Frenchman, requiring to shrug, gave way to the Englishman's eccentric obstinacy, and signified that he was his guide. Quite so, and Skepsey showed alacrity and confidence in following; he carried his bag. But . . . he sought to convey to the porter that the terms of their association were cordial. A waving of the right hand to the heavens ratified the treaty on the French side. Nods and smiles and gesticulations, with across-Channel vocables, as it were Dover Cliffs to Calais Sands and back, pleasantly beguiled the way down to the Hôtel du Paradis—where Skepsey fumbled at his pocket for coin current; but the Frenchman, all shaken by a tornado of negation, clapped him on the shoulder, and sang him a quatrain. Skepsey had, in politeness, to stand listening and blinking, plunged in the contrition of ignorance, eclipsed. He took it to signify something to the effect that money should not pass between friends. It was the amatory farewell address of Henry IV. to his *charmante* Gabrielle; and with—

“Percé de mille dards
L'honneur m'appelle
Au champs de Mars.”

the Frenchman, in a backing of measured step, apologised for his enforced withdrawal from the stranger who had captured his heart.”

One asks one's self, is this real? Did it ever happen? That a French railway porter seized Skepsey's bag we can well believe. That there was a struggle is more than probable. That words were exchanged is a certainty. But that these words were complimentary and accompanied by smiles, and that the porter refused a tip, and gave utterance to an amatory farewell in verse —this all seems unnatural, untrue to life, purely imaginative. The railway porter that Meredith gives us is a very desirable person, but one whom, unfortunately, we have never met in France; he might possibly, however, be found in Ireland.

Thus in Meredith's prose works we have had appreciation and admiration of nearly all that is French. In his poems to France Meredith strikes a deeper note. Here it is that we see

his heart-felt devotion, his almost filial reverence for her, best expressed. In "France, December, 1870," written in that very month (though not published till 1871), he sings the love and sorrow he felt for France's smitten motherhood, even while he justifies the blow that has felled her. He foretells her repentance, her purification and her eventual resurrection to a place of leadership among the nations. In the opening lines he says, in a voice wrung with anguish :—

"We look for her that sunlike stood
Upon the forehead of the day,
An orb of nations, radiating food
For body and for mind alway.
Where is the Shape of glad array,
The nervous hands, the front of steel,
The clarion tongue? Where is the bold, proud face?
We see a vacant place.
We hear an iron heel."

The last line, "We hear an iron heel," is the one and only reference to the Prussian conquerors. This reticence is extraordinarily impressive. In the next stanza Meredith pays a magnificent tribute to France for what she did so spontaneously and unselfishly in 1789. He praises her who

" . . . gave note, and in
The good name of humanity
Called for the daring vision."

Then comes the story of her fall. We are told that we must not

"Look out for spreading boughs
On the riven forest tree,"

but rather

"Look down where deep in blood and mire
Black thunder plants his feet, and ploughs
The soil for ruin: that is France:
Still thrilling like a lyre."

Surely this idea of France "still thrilling like a lyre" amid corruption, blood, mire, and death, is one that only a true lover like Meredith could have conceived and expressed.

The next is a wonderful stanza, in which he hails France as

“ Mother of Pride, her sanctuary shamed.
 Mother of Delicacy and made a mark
 For outrage. Mother of Luxury, stripped stark :
 Mother of Heroes, bondsmen : ”

and again :

“ Mother of Honour and dishonoured : Mother
 Of Glory she, condemned to crown with bays
 Her victor, and be fountain of his praise.”

The poet then asks if France be not sufficiently shamed, but the answer is, that being

“ Mother of Reason, she is trebly cursed
 To feel, to see, to justify the blow.
 ‘Tis thus they reap in blood, in blood who sow.”

But Meredith’s faith in France is unshaken. He feels that this is not the end ; that she will rise again from her bed of anguish and shame to better things. Indeed, he lived to see the fulfilment of his prophecy, and in his “Alsace-Lorraine,” written at the close of the century, he rejoices at her recovery in these words :—

“ My faith in her when she lay low
 Was fountain; now as wave at flow
 Beneath the lights, my faith in God is blest.”

Should we not compare with this those two fine poems of Swinburne’s, entitled *Quia multum amavit* and *Mater Dolorosa*, inspired by the same subject and treating it in a like reverend and loving spirit?¹—

“ Who is this that sits by the way, by the wild way-side,
 In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride.
 In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,
 With the night for a garment upon her, with torn, wet hair?
 She is finer of face than the daughters of men, and her eyes
 Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of skies.

(1) *Songs before Sunrise.*

“This is she for whose sake, being fallen, for whose abject sake,
 Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men’s hearts break.
 This is she, for whose love, having seen her, the men that were
 Poured life out like water, and shed their souls upon air.
 This is she for whose glory their years were counted as foam;
 Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon Rome.”

In his *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History* (1898), Meredith republished his “France, December, 1870,” and gave us three new poems : “The Revolution,” “Napoleon,” and “Alsace-Lorraine.” The first two odes are what Mr. Trevelyan has justly termed “a chaos of half-completed images”; but there are verses in the ode to Napoleon which are verily molten lava. It has been said that Napoleon himself might have written it had he been a poet. Still Meredith was not satisfied with what he had done for France in prose and verse. He wrote to M. Photiadès in a letter dated the 19th of September, 1908¹ :—

“It is true that my heart has always beaten for France; and it is no less true that until this day I have not sufficiently recognised the debt that mankind owes her. My *Odes in Contribution* are an effort in this direction. If I were younger I should do more and better. . . .”

It is impossible that we should not find in Meredith, with his thorough knowledge of the French language, his intimate acquaintance with French literature, and his sympathy and admiration for France herself, some traces of this influence in his work. Too much has been made of Germanic influence on his writings. It is a fact that he was partly educated in Germany, and that he shows in his style a fondness for the phraseology of the Germans—a fondness for the inverted sentence, with object first and consequent inversion of verb and subject, for the sentence commencing with an adverbial phrase. Yet, if we look into the question, we find that these periods occur in the reflective and philosophical portion of his novels, which serve only as an introduction. Once Meredith has limped laboriously through his preliminary matter and the time is ripe for action, he casts aside his crutches “made in Germany,” and dashes headlong forward with the undeniable French *élan*. His dialogue is crisp, brilliant, and swift, more like sparkling French than sober

(1) See page 284 of M. Photiadès’ book.

English. He has more than any other English writer the vivid flashes of meaning, the gleam of wit, the idea embodied in a word, and the quick repartee that are so intrinsically French. There are passages that remind one of Voltaire for their restrained power. There are others that bring to our thoughts the masterly incisiveness of Mérimée, perhaps the greatest of French storytellers. In some of his descriptive passages he has the intensity and force of Saint-Simon, and in his epigrams much of the suggestiveness and powers of condensation of La Rochefoucauld ; and last but not least, he shares with Molière, and perhaps with Shakespeare, the power to create characters instinct with everlasting truth—and this surely pertains to what is greatest in Art and in Literature.

THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN THOUGHT ON BRAZILIAN LITERATURE.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SENHOR MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA LIMA,
HON. F.R.S.L.

[Read on November 25th, 1914.]

Mr. EDMUND GOSSE, C.B., LL.D., Vice-President,
in the Chair.

The Chairman said :

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

The Royal Society of Literature enjoys this evening the peculiar advantage of being addressed on the subject of the intellectual life of Brazil by one of the most distinguished of Brazilian writers. It has always been the privilege of this Society to welcome foreigners who have achieved literary distinction, and it did so half a century ago, when public interest was not open in England as fortunately it now is to the peculiar value of the best exotic literature.

It is my good fortune to-night to introduce to you Mr. Oliveira Lima, who has been called, and who deserves to be called, “the intellectual ambassador of Brazil.” Mr. Oliveira Lima was for twenty-three years, in the literal sense, a diplomat, and he has forwarded the political and material welfare of his country in Japan, in the United States, in Belgium, in France, and here at the Court of St. James’s. He has travelled widely and read much. He has taught

Europe to appreciate the mental advantages and the poetical wealth of his native country.

The language of that native country is, as you know, Portuguese, and when Brazil, in its colonial or semi-colonial development, began to produce writers, those writers competed more or less painfully with their more fortunate brethren in Portugal. But the solidarity of the Brazilians is now acknowledged. I observe in the anthology of the 'Hundred Best Portuguese Poems' (*As cem melhores poesias lyricas*), edited by the first of Portuguese writers, Prof. Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos, that the editor declines to include any American examples, on the ground that "it is plain that the poets of Brazil demand independent representation."* Brazil has been known for four centuries, she has existed as a country for three centuries, yet in her intellectual life she is still young.

Mr. Oliveira Lima will teach us this evening to enjoy the bloom of this youth. I venture to welcome him among us in the words which Victor Hugo on a public occasion addressed to the Brazilians: "You join the light of Europe to the sunshine of America."

SENHOR OLIVEIRA LIMA then read the following paper:

THE Brazilian literature is—and it could not be otherwise—the reflection of European thought. The influence of exotic elements—I mean in this case the aboriginal Indian and the imported African

* "Claro está que os Poetas Brasileiros requerem representação independente."

negro—is to be reckoned and can even be traced through its evolution, but on a small scale or proportion, rather in a special manner that does not affect the substance of thought, although it has modified or distinguished the literary expression. The intellectual and—what is more important—the moral basis is European, nay, it is Christian; the fundamental ideas are unmistakably Occidental. Brazilian literature is a branch, or, if you prefer, a sub-branch of the Latin tree. The form, the appearance may only betray sometimes—often, perhaps—certain peculiar aspects due to the addition or infiltration of those strangely characteristic factors which operate much more by way of blood, as a result of race mixture, than directly, by any kind of cultural suggestion.

In fact, the Portuguese encountered a savage country, whose population was still less advanced than the African tribes, and they carried with them to their colonies in the sixteenth century their own civilisation, shaping accordingly to it the moral development of such overseas dominions which did not offer, like India, the strong resistance of an old and deep-rooted full civilisation. We must remember that the sixteenth century has been the most brilliant period of Portuguese letters, for it was the century in which Camões composed his great epic poem, one of the gems of universal literature, and João de Barros described in an admirable prose the feats of his contemporaries in that legendary East, reached after a century of persistent efforts by the pioneer navigators of the modern world.

Our first poem is, as a matter of fact, a pale,

ungraceful imitation of the “Lusiads,” composed by Bento Teixeira Pinto in praise of the feudal lord of Pernambuco, a valiant knight who accompanied King Sebastian in his ill-fated Moroccan expedition, and is credited with having dismounted and given his charger to the sovereign when the latter had his horse killed under him at the climax of the battle.

Our first prose work, entitled ‘Dialogues of the Grandeur of Brazil,’ contains the source of the two currents which were to run through the colonial era of our intellectual life: the humanist tendency, specially introduced by the Jesuit Fathers, who were the teachers and the moralisers of the new country, a kind of a varnish under which the spontaneity was to disappear until the surface cracked all over and showed reality again; and the national pride, which began by a lavish admiration of a luxuriant nature, to end with a boastful conception of the abundant resources of the land.

Humanism was the rule in Europe since the Renaissance until the withdrawal of classicism in favour of romanticism. So it happened in Brazil. Sermons, a very copious chapter of Brazilian as well as of Portuguese literature; poetry, a chapter no less replete with conventional ardour; history, framed in academies fit to compete with *les précieuses ridicules* rather than with *l'hôtel de Ramboillet*—every writing was done under the suggestion of the classics. Tropical battles recalled but those of the ‘Iliad’; their heroes were all compared to Ajax and Achilles, Hector and Ulysses. Tropical love dared to evoke winter frost and ice as if it feared melting away.

Good taste, which is responsible for so much tedious literature, forbade every alteration in those artificial comparisons and consecrated rhetorical images. Christmas in Brazil, for instance, means, as you are aware, mid-summer. Some people object to it, as it upsets their idea of things; but we cannot help our winter beginning in June. Yet our poets of the eighteenth century, the Arcadians, the shepherds of a country without sheep, always attached in their sonnets the most frigid adjectives to our hot December.

The influence to be pointed out is more than that of European thought alone: it is the influence even of European sensations. If love sometimes assumed an exotic character, it was because it followed in the wake of European invaders. They are responsible for their irrepressible devotion to dusky beauties and for the lyrics that sprang from this less crystalline source of information. Long before Gonçalves Dias, the greatest of Brazilian poets of the nineteenth century, gave a touching expression to the melancholy of the Indian half-caste virgin, the poor, handsome Marabá, Gregorio de Mattos—a famous satirical poet of the seventeenth century, the so-called father of our literature (a paternity which he claimed as little as any other)—sang with full conviction the charms of the Mulatto girls swarming around him.

I must, however, say that romanticism, owing perhaps to this variety and freedom of love, began earlier in Brazil than in Europe. Our lyrics could not remain for ever insensible to the local environment in its proper and true features, and once it

had started in such a direction it was bound to find a natural and fitting interpretation of its own. It really was so, and Gonzaga in Brazil anticipated Garrett in Portugal by the ingenuity of his sentiments and the candour of his language. The distance between the two centuries, the eighteenth and the nineteenth, is marked by the contrast of the destinies of those two men: Gonzaga died an exile in Africa for having dreamed, more than plotted, of the independence of his country; Garrett died a veteran dandy, in the harness of a Minister of State, hiding his wrinkles under cosmetics.

The romantic school itself is in Brazil an offspring of that general European literary renewal, the sources of which Madame de Staël was lucky enough to discover in Germany. We had, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, a dramatic author who was a Jew, so much so that he was, by order of the Holy Office, burned in Lisbon for lack of Christian faith. He derived much of his inspiration from Regnard and Molière, although displaying a truly national character in his farcical revival of mythological life. In this sense he was in his turn a precursor of Meilhac and Halévy, the two eminent collaborators of Offenbach in their Hellenic parodies. Literature is, after all, an exchange of influences, and imitations do not deserve this pejorative name when they assimilate in a high degree foreign models and know how to adapt exactly their teaching to domestic purposes.

Chateaubriand lent to French romanticism a triple character—that of a Christian revival, I mean a reawakening of religious feelings, very much neglected

by the writers claiming kinship to Voltaire and philosophers of encyclopaedical culture; that of an idealisation of uncivilised life as being nearer to perfection, a thesis maintained with enthusiasm by Jean Jaques Rousseau; and finally, that of a state of moral doubt facing problems of life and anguish of the soul, translated into sorrow and ultimately into disbelief. These traits are easily detected respectively in ‘*Le Génie du Christianisme*,’ ‘*Atala*,’ and ‘*René*; Brazilian letters show them reproduced. The first finds its parallel in Souza Caldas, whose inspiration is entirely biblical. The inspiration of Gonçalves Dias and all the other authors of the famous *Indianist* school runs from the ‘*Natchez*,’ which had been preceded by the world famous idyl of “*Paul et Virginie*,” to which Bernardin de Saint Pierre granted a tropical scenery in order to render it more effective and emotional. Finally, the vacillations of ‘*René*’ were increased to the point of torture and despair when Byron’s influence, and also Leopardi’s, were added to that of Chateaubriand and produced a whole generation of revolted and despondent poets, which goes from Alvares de Azevedo—a youth of genius—to Junqueira Freire—a fugitive from the cloister.

Indianism appealed in Brazil both to a growing literary tendency which had produced in Europe the chimera of the “man of nature” and the utopia of ‘*Emile’s*’ education, and to a nationalist feeling invigorated by the separation of the new Brazilian nationality from its mother country.

Portugal had conquered a part of the New World, but the whole of the New World had reasserted its

liberty, and Brazilians after all represented—so Indianists used to say—the fierce aboriginal population, not the brutal European invaders. From their point of view heredity came consequently through women, as I believe it is the case in *Madagascar*.

Let us, however, not find fault with any exaggeration in this field. You know what a sagacious and cautious mind was that of Montaigne, a pessimist whose contempt for mankind was so deep. Certainly for this reason he enjoyed to the utmost the refrain of a miserable Indian song of Brazil, which he had heard from the lips of one of Villegaignon's companions at Rio de Janeiro. Villegaignon, I must explain to you, was a French adventurer of much bravery who had happily escorted Mary Stuart from Scotland to France, when she went to wed the Dauphin against British wishes, and who afterwards dreamed of founding in Brazil an Arcadia of the Protestant creed, reconciling Luther and Calvin, a task beyond his means and power even in tropical wilderness.

The author of the ‘*Essais*’ praises highly that free and unconventional poetry which betrayed, in his opinion, so much haughtiness, such a spirit of independence, and at the same time such a simplicity so worthy of a society of wise people. In fact, the Indians had as few social virtues as clothes. They were thorough-going barbarians, only raised to a high moral level by literary machinery.

Montaigne had acquired a personal acquaintance with Brazilian redskins, not that he himself had reached our shores in his wanderings, which were deliberately confined to old and refined Italy; but

because a troop of Indians from the coast had been taken to Normandy by French ships, which at that time carried on a brisk trade in Brazil wood. These savages had played an important part in the festivities celebrated at Rouen in honour of Henri II and Catherine de Medici, arousing immense curiosity. French people had already become familiar with our monkeys, our parrots, and our aras, but they had not yet seen the human beings from the New World, and those fifty plumed knights who were suddenly exposed to their eyes, behaved wonderfully well: while they were in France, they abstained from their anthropophagie diet and were punctual in giving a faithful performance of their doings in every-day life.

Exotism began at that moment to be impressed on European life as a part of its cosmopolitanism, in the same way as the over-seas societies reproduced in their literary pursuits European feelings. You can scarcely imagine how much we have felt and suffered for your pains, your ideals, and your faults. Generations have sobbed beyond the ocean over Poland's fate, as if we had gone ourselves through the ordeal of partition and a century of oppression. The French Revolution is as well known and as popular in South America as in France. Napoleon was exalted there with an enthusiasm only second to Berenger's, and pitied with a sympathy rivalling that felt by Manzoni.

One of the very best pieces of Brazilian poetry is the ode, "Waterloo," by Magalhães, the coloured language of which vibrates with the victorious sound of the guns of Austerlitz as well as with the

plaintive sound of the waves dashing against the rocks of St. Helena.

Magalhães, who, when in Brazil, had published some ‘Nights’ in the style of those of Young, was converted whilst in Paris, where he published in 1836 his ‘Poetical Sighs,’ into a convinced disciple of the romantic school, trying to nationalise his feelings by tinging them with local Brazilian colour through the customary apotheosis of the Indian soul. In fact, he received his true suggestions from European motives, only he concealed his game as a diplomat that he was. He avows himself to have written his poems—I copy his own words—amidst the ruins of old Rome, dreaming of the destinies of Empires; on the summit of the Alps, where imagination wanders in the infinite, as an atom in space; in the shadow of cathedrals, admiring God’s might and the miracles of Christianism; under the cypresses which protect the tombs—we have no cypresses in Brazil;—meditating on the fate of the fatherland—which was in no sense menaced,—on human passions and on the *néant de la vie*. This expression is quite familiar to you: all romanticism is contained in it.

In order to give you an idea of the feelings of a Brazilian man of letters towards Napoleon, allow me to read his poem, “Waterloo,” which is as enthusiastic as if it had been written by a “grenadier de la vieille garde.” No mind foreign to European culture, and specially to French civilisation, could have conceived it. I did not dare to translate it myself into English, not being a poet and not mastering your language, so I will read it from the

French translation of my good friend Victor Orban, who is an artist of form, a lover of Brazil, and a fine French scholar.*

GONÇALVES DE MAGALHÃES: ‘NAPOLÉON À WATERLOO.’

“Tout n'a manqué que quand tout avait réussi” (*Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène. Mémorial*).

“Voici l'endroit où s'est éclipsé ce météore fatal aux têtes royales! Et à l'heure même où s'obscurcissait sa gloire, le soleil disparaissait là-bas dans les ténèbres. Rouge était l'horizon, et rouge était la terre! Deux astres penchaient vers leur déclin: tous deux s'étaient élevés jusqu'an zenith, tous deux avaient connu la même splendeur; et à leur déclin ils furent aussi grands qu'à l'heure du triomphe.

“Waterloo! . . . Waterloo! . . . Ce nom révèle à l'Humanité une sublime leçon! Un océan de poussière, de feu et de fumée a balayé ici l'armée invincible, comme jadis le Vésuve inonda Pompéi et i'ensevelit tout entière.

“Le pâtre que mène paître son tronpeau; le corbeau qui, déployant son vol au-dessus du lion de granit, se met en quête d'une proie sanglante; l'écho de la forêt et le pèlerin qui, en curieux, visite ces lieux; tous passent en répétant: Waterloo . . . Waterloo! . . .

“C'est ici que moururent les braves de Marengo! Cependant ce héros de mille batailles qui tenait dans ses mains la destinée des rois; ce héros, de la pointe de son épée, traçant sur la carte les limites des nations, entouré de ses maréchaux, dictait ses ordres; et de son haleine enflammée, il étouffait les phalanges ennemis et ralliait le courage au cœur de ses troupes. Oui, ici le génie des victoires était présent et mesurait le champ de bataille de son regard d'aigle! L'infernal retentissement du choc des armes, le tonnerre des canons qui ne cessaient de gronder,

* Victor Orban, ‘Littérature Brésilienne,’ 2^e édition, Paris, Garnier Frères, 1 vol. de 528 pages.

le siflement des balles qui gémissaient, l'horreur, la confusion, les cris, les soupirs formaient comme un orchestre à ses oreilles ! Rien ne le troublait !—Les boulets, qu'autour de lui l'ennemi lançait par centaines, s'inclinaient respectueusement comme des lions soumis et, sans oser le toucher, venaient raser la terre au pied de son coursier.

“ Oh ! pourquoi n'a-t-il pas vaincu ?—Rien ne lui était plus facile ! Faut-il accuser la destinée ou la trahison ?—L'aigle sublime qui, traversant le ciel d'un vol large et superbe, jetait l'épouvante parmi les nations, depuis les bords de la Seine jusqu'aux bouches du Nil, pourquoi s'abaisse-t-il ici au niveau des hommes ? Oh ! pourquoi n'a-t-il pas vaincu ?—L'ange de la gloire entendit trois fois l'hymne de la victoire et trois fois il s'écria : Il est encore trop tôt ! Son épée gémissait dans le fourreau, son fougneux coursier hennissait d'inquiétude, quoique accoutumé aux horreurs de la guerre et à la fumée de mille canons. Les escadrons s'entrechoquaient dans la mêlée ; le siflement des balles déchirait les airs ; mille éclairs sinistres se croisaient ; le cliquetis retentissant des sabres, des baïonnettes et des lances accompagnait les détonations. Mais lui, impassible comme un rocher ou comme une statue équestre de bronze à laquelle un pouvoir magique eût donné la vie, il voyait ses bataillons tomber, renversés comme des murs d'airain, fondroyés de cent coups de tonnerre. Et il cherchait à lire son destin dans le ciel.

“ Pour la dernière fois il brandit son épée et s'élança étincelant dans la mêlée. Son bras est la tempête ; son épée est la foudre ! Mais une main toute-puissante lui touche la poitrine. C'est la main du Seigneur ; c'est l'obstacle invincible ! Assez, guerrier ! Ta gloire est la mienne ; ta force m'appartient. Tu as achevé ton auguste mission. Tu n'es qu'un homme ; arrête !

“ Ils étaient le petit nombre, certes ; mais qu'importe ? Qu'importe que Grouchy, sourd aux trompettes, n'entendît point les rumeurs de guerre qui criaient : Grouchy ! Grouchy ! à nous, dépêche-toi ; ton Empereur t'attend. Ah !

ne laisse pas tes braves compagnons succomber sous les coups de cette mer déchaînée qui, mal vaincue, s'élève en tourbillons renaissants, telles les vagues de l'Océan agité, qui, furieuses, se dressent, luttent, se brisent contre le rocher, s'éparpillent en poussière, puis reparaissent toujours plus menaçantes.

“Ils étaient peu nombreux, en vérité; et contre cette poigné de braves les nations en armes combattaient! Mais ces quelques soldats avaient été vainqueurs à Iéna, à Montmirail, à Ansterlitz. A leur tête, le Thabor et les Alpes escarpées avaient vu passer les aigles de la victoire! Et le Rhin et le Mançanarez et l'Adige et l'Euphrate, en vain, s'étaient opposés à leur marche.

“Ils étaient peu nombreux, mais, jamais vaincus, ils comptaient leurs jours par les batailles, et leurs têtes avaient blanchi dans les combats; ils avaient connu avec orgueil l'ardeur du soleil d'Égypte, la peste à Jaffa, la soif dans les déserts, et la faim, et le froid des camps moscovites. Ils étaient une poignée de braves qui ne se rendent pas,—mais qui menrent!

“Oh! ils étaient assez nombreux pour vaincre! En vain l'univers entier aurait combattu contre eux, si Dieu, qui les voyait, n'avait dit: Assez!

“Oh! jour fatal, jour d'opprobre pour les vainqueurs! Honte à jamais à la génération qui insulte le Lion qui, magnanime, se livre.

“Le voici, assis sur le rocher, écoutant l'écho funèbre des ondes qui murmurent son cantique de mort; les bras croisés sur sa large poitrine, il ressemble au naufragé, échappé à la tourmente, que les vagues ont rejeté sur un écueil; il ressemble à une statue de marbre dressée sur un tombeau.

“Quelle grande idée l'occupe et tourbillonne dans son âme aussi vaste que le monde?

“Il voit ces rois, choisis par lui dans le rang de ses braves, qui le trahissent. Il distingue au loin mille pygmées rivaux qui mutilent son œuvre gigantesque, comme jadis

de vils esclaves se partagèrent entre eux l'empire de Macédoine. Alors un rire de colère lui monte au visage, et son dépit se change en pitié.

“Le cri de son fils encore innocent retentit dans son coeur, et une larme, la première, vient mouiller ses yeux. De tant de couronnes qu'il a réunies pour en doter ce fils, il ne lui reste à présent que son nom, ce nom connu de l'univers entier ! Ah ! il a tout perdu ! l'épouse, le fils, la patrie, le monde, et jusqu'à ses fidèles soldats. Mais son âme était ferme comme le marbre qui reste intact même après que la foudre l'a frappé !

“Jamais, jamais mortel ne s'est élevé aussi haut. Il fut le plus grand conquérant de la terre. Seul, il brille au-dessus de tout, comme au faîte de la colonne Vendôme sa statue de bronze se dresse sous le ciel. Au-dessus de lui il n'y a que Dieu—mais Dieu seulement !

“De la liberté il fut le messager. Son épée, terreur des tyrans, fut le soleil qui guida l'Humanité. Nous lui devons un bien dont tous nous jouissons ; les générations futures lui seront reconnaissantes, et quand elles répéteront son nom—Napoléon—elles seront remplies d'épouvanter.”

I think that we ought to be very grateful to our authors for this appeal to European ideas and ideals, as savage inspiration alone would have made our literature most tedious, and, indeed, deprived it of most of its elevation and moral depth. One might endow Indians with every noble attribute, transfer to them Roman stoicism and Christian charity, it does not prevent social intercourse with them from lacking every attractive feature. People without cosy and artistic homes and without elegant new-fashioned dresses soon become terribly uninteresting. Feelings have to be sought for; most people are satisfied with externals. Bravery and contempt for

comfort will do for a certain period ; they are pre-dicates eminently respectable during war time, but, fortunately for mankind, peace succeeds war, and in peace one wishes to make up for the arduous times and enjoy life after having enjoyed death.

What would not Brazilian letters have missed if they had kept apart from European spiritual life ! Musset taught some of our poets to give up restraining their passions, and they learned admirably to do so, as they learned with your Satanic bards to brave death, scorn eternity, and scoff at Heaven.

"If it be true," said Alvares de Azevedo in one of his poems, "The Dying Poet," "that the *jouisseurs*, the worshippers of wine, are with the devil, better to keep them company than to endure the idiots of Heaven"! I beg your pardon for this irreverent language of my countryman ; it was not always like that. He had alternate periods of sad depression, in which eternity seemed a relief, and Shelley took the place of Byron.

"I depart from life as the dust-covered pilgrim leaves the wearisome desert—like the hours of a long nightmare dissipated by a doleful knell. Carry my solitary coffin to a forest untrodden by men, under the arms of a cross, and write on the tomb, 'Here lies a poet—in life he dreamed and loved.'"

Let me say it again : it would have been a pity if Brazilian letters had developed secluded from European thought. Victor Hugo and his generous conceptions and his verbal display would have had no opportunity of trying their effect on souls and imaginations quite inclined to follow him in all his reveries, his angers, and his hobbies.

We cast incense with him upon the Colonne Vendôme and put on the pillory “Napoléon le Petit”; with him we relished the light and perfume of the East, pitied ‘*Les Misérables*,’ ran through ‘*La Légende des Siècles*.’ Castro Alves, who is, in a certain sense, by the abundance of local colour, the loftiness of ideals and the brilliancy of his versatile fancy, our most accomplished romantic poet, is a disciple of the French master of the verse and incomparable shaper of images.

The burning question of the abolition of slavery, around which gravitated the whole economical and, we may say, political life of Brazil during the empire, lent a humanitarian character, derived from its own essence, to Castro Alves’ poetry, whose literary hatred of abuses and compassion for suffering acquired in such a way a pathetic national touch. Love never fails as a poet’s theme; it is sure never to be disappointing, but sympathy stirs the nobler fibre of human heart.

Let me make you acquainted with his “Voices of Africa,” which are the dark continent’s complaint against its sombre destiny :

CASTRO ALVES: ‘*VOIX D’AFRIQUE*.’

“ Dieu ! ô Dieu ! où es-tu, que ne me réponds-tu ? En quel monde, en quelle étoile te caches-tu, retiré au fond des cieux ? Il y a deux mille ans que je t’ai jeté mon cri, et depuis lors, il ébranle en vain l’infini. . . . Où es-tu, Seigneur, mon Dieu ?

“ Comme Prométhée, tu m’as clonée un jour à la rouge falaise du désert, galère sans limites ! . . . Pour vautour, tu m’as donné le soleil brûlant ! Et la terre de Suez fut la chaîne que tu m’attachas aux pieds. . . .

“ Le cheval du Bédouin s’abat renversé sous le furent et expire dans le sable. Ma cruppe saigne, la douleur m’accable, ton bras éternel me cingle du simoun.

“ Mes soeurs sont belles et gracieuses. . . . L’Asie s’endort dans l’ombre voluptueuse des harems du sultan, ou se berce sur le dos de blancs éléphants, couverte de pierreries, aux plages de l’Hindoustan.

“ Pour tente, elle a les cimes de l’Himalaya. . . . Le Gange amoureux baise sa plage converte de coraux. . . . Le ciel attiédit la brise de Mysore ; et elle sommeille dans les temples de Brahma, dans les pagodes colossales. . . .

“ L’Europe, ah ! elle est toujours la glorieuse ! . . . La femme éblouissante et capricieuse, reine et courtisane ; artiste, elle taille le marbre de Carrare ; poète, ivre d’un glorieux enthousiasme, elle chante les hymnes de Ferrare! . . .

“ Mais moi, Seigneur ! . . . Moi, triste, abandonnée, égarée, perdue au milieu des déserts, je marche en vain ! Si je pleure, le sable ardent boit mes larmes, et c’est peut-être, ô Dieu élément, pour que tu n’en retrouves point la trace sur le sol !

“ Dans la forêt je n’ai pas une ombre pour m’abriter, et pas un temple ne me reste sur le sol embrasé. . . . Quand je monte aux pyramides d’Égypte, en vain aux quatre coins du ciel, en pleurant, je m’écrie : Abrite-moi, Seigneur ! . . .

“ Comme le prophète se couvre la tête de cendres, je me voile le front de la poussière que me jette le féroce sirocco. . . . Quand je passe, ensevelie dans le Sahara,—Ah ! dit-on, l’Afrique passe là-bas, enveloppée de son blanc burnous.

“ Et l’on ne voit pas que le désert est mon linceul, que le silence campe, solitaire, an-dessus de ma poitrine. Là, dans le sol où croît à peine le chardon, bâille le Sphinx colossal de pierre, les yeux fixés sur le morne ciel.

“ Sur les colonnes écroulées de Thèbes, les cigognes, penchées, observent secrètement l’horizon sans bornes

. . . où l'on voit poindre la caravane errante et le chameau monotone, haletant, qui revient d'Ephraïm. . . .

“ N'est-ce pas encore assez de douleur, ô Dieu terrible ? Ton coeur éternel n'a-t-il pas épuisé sa vengeance et sa rancune ? Et qu'est-ce que je t'ai fait, Seigneur ? Quel sombre crime ai-je jamais commis pour que tu me menaces ainsi de ton glaive vengeur ? . . .

“ C'était après le déluge . . . un voyageur noir, sombre, pâle, haletant, descendait de l'Ararat. . . . Et je dis au pèlerin terrifié : Cham, tu seras mon époux bien-aimé . . . je serai ton Eloa.”

“ Depuis ce jour, le vent du malheur passe dans mes cheveux en hurlant son cruel anathème ; les tribus errent dans les vagues de sable, et le nomade affamé parcourt mes plages sur son rapide coursier.

“ J'ai vu la science désérer l'Égypte . . . j'ai vu mon peuple suivre—Juif maudit—un sentier de perdition. . . . Ensuite j'ai vu ma race melheureuse emportée entre les serres de l'Europe, ce faucon sanguinaire ! . . .

“ Christ ! en vain tu mourus sur la montagne. . . . Ton sang n'a pas lavé sur mon front la tache originelle. Aujourd'hui encore, par un sort funeste, mes enfants sont les bêtes de somme de l'univers . . . et moi, je suis devenue une pâture universelle !

“ Aujourd'hui l'Amérique se repaît de mon sang,—Condor qui s'est transformé en vautour, oiseau de l'esclavage. Elle s'est jointe aux autres, cette soeur traîtresse ! De même qu'autrefois les vils frères de Joseph vendirent leur propre frère !

“ C'est assex, Seigneur ! De ton bras puissant, à travers les astres, à travers l'espace, fais un geste de pardon pour mes crimes ! Depuis deux mille ans, mon long cri d'agonie éclate en sanglotant. . . . Écoute-le retentir là-bas dans l'infini, mon Dieu ! Seigneur, mon Dieu !”

Our war against Paraguay, which required a Triple Alliance and lasted five years, from 1865 to

1870, and the great European war of 1870-71, which caused the appearance of a new and powerful factor in the Old World's policy and economy, gave birth in Brazil to a heroic poetry which had slumbered since the expulsion of the Dutch in the seventeenth century, because its revival when the Independence occurred was of a purely conventional character. Our independence from the mother country was, indeed, *une séparation à l'amiable*, with very little, if any, bloodshed. The only laurels of victory belong to the navy, which happily succeeded in preserving the unity of the Portuguese Empire in America, which seemed doomed to dispersion like the Spanish Empire.

Brazil's navy had been, through a happy inspiration, entrusted to that dogged fighter and splendid *loup de mer* called Lord Cochrane, Earl of Dun-donald in Great Britain, and Marquis de Maranhão in Brazil, and to his able lieutenants, Grenfell and Taylor. Brazil remembered their excellent lessons when, in the Paraguayan War, her admiral rammed the enemy's squadron at Riachuelo and her ships passed by the fortress of Humayta, under the shells of eighty guns.

Our war against the Dutch in the seventeenth century won from a great Portuguese historian the name of a new Iliad. It was certainly a protracted and an unequal struggle, for its longest phase was fought by civilians against soldiers, and contains dashing epic episodes, worthy in fact of being recalled and celebrated like those of Trojan memory. They only lack the fascination of a semi-fabulous time, the halo of Hellenic classical environment,

and . . . the genius of Homer to praise them in superb poetry and convert pale reality into shining fiction.

Robert Southey, your Poet Laureate, to whom Brazil is indebted for her best history—I mean the most dramatic, the liveliest, the most attractive—in treating this subject, does not wax as enthusiastic as the Portuguese historian, Oliveira Martins, who possessed, however, a pessimistic, cynical disposition. It was, perhaps, in Southey's temper to be enthusiastic, and he certainly was so—his works, his letters, his polemics prove it—but his analytical power was not inferior to his poetical passion, and abated this flame, endowing his mind with a balance that one might envy.

He writes in his second volume of his ‘History of Brazil’ :

“The motives of that insurrection were both as evil and as good as they have been represented by the writers of the different countries. Joam Fernandes Vieira (the principal chief of the insurrection) would not perhaps have found encouragement in his designs if many of the leading conspirators had not been men of desperate fortunes; but, on the other hand, nothing short of the high principle of patriotism could have enabled him and his countrymen to persevere through so many difficulties, and such continual disappointments. . . . The recovery of Pernambuco has left Portugal in undisputed possession of one of the most extensive and highly favoured regions of the globe; an empire which, under every imaginable circumstance of misgovernment [he wrote in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the remark cannot fairly be applied a century later], has continued to advance in population and in industry, which is now rapidly progressive, and which, what-

ever revolutions it may be destined to undergo [a few years after the book was published Brazil became independent], will remain the patrimony of a Portuguese people, speaking the language of Fernam Lopes, of Barros, of Camoens, and Vieira."

So, patriotism was already a Brazilian issue in the eighteenth century, according to an eminent British writer, and it continuously increased in strength and vigour during the autonomous life of the country. As you know, it does not exclude cosmopolitan tastes or cosmopolitan affections. Patriotism does not mean the hatred of what is foreign, what the Greeks called *xenophobia*; it means, rather, at least for us, a love, sometimes a jealous love, of our own country, our own feelings, our own peculiarities, which culture teaches us to combine with the lessons and experiences of other peoples.

The present war—allow me this passing reference to a subject that cannot fail to be in everybody's mind from dawn to dusk—shows chiefly how the whole world has been converted by civilisation into a solid mass of interests, in many cases conflicting, but in other cases harmonious. Human solidarity is proven to satiety, as we shall suffer by the war, from England to Australia, from Siberia to Chili, and if the opposing sides are extreme, human sympathy stays by itself and rises above nations' or races' conflicts.

The Brazilians have not avoided such solidarity: on the contrary, we have always been ready to follow European intellectual and moral leadership. In recent years our letters show, just as in colonial

times, the various currents and under-currents of Western culture. We burned our offerings on the altar of scientific or speculative poetry, of which Sully Prudhomme was the pontiff; we cultivated parnasianism or the worship of the form, as an antidote to the ultra-romantic crisis, and worked up the sonnet to a rare perfection, as you may see by the one I am going to read to you, by Raymundo Corrêa:

RAYMUNDO CORRÊA : 'LES COLOMBES.'

" Sitôt éveillée, elle s'en va la première colombe . . .
 Une autre la suit . . . une autre encore . . . Enfin,
 par dizaines, les colombes quittent leurs colombiers, dès
 que la fraîche aurore jette son premier rayon rose.

" Et vers le soir, quand l'âpre vent du nord se met à souffler, sereines, agitant leurs ailes, secouant leurs plumes,
 au gîte elles reviennent toutes, par bandes joyeuses.

" De même, de nos coeurs où ils éclosent, nos rêves, un à un, s'envolent à tire-d'aile, comme les colombes quittant
 leurs colombiers.

" Déployant leur vol dans l'azur de la jeunesse, ils fuient . . . Mais les colombes reviennent aux colombiers,
 tandis que nos rêves, lorsqu'ils ont déserté nos coeurs,
 c'est sans retour. . . ."

We did not stop at parnasianism, although the very best of our recent poets belong to this school: we thought nothing of adopting everyone of the decadent and symbolist schools which sprung up in Europe, to the great horror of classic reminiscences and of conventional rules; we cherished naturalism to such an extent that nowhere have Flaubert, Maupassant, and especially Zola, been equally influential, either directly or through their great

Portuguese representative, Eça de Queiroz, who, however, really tried, as he said to have been his purpose, to throw over Truth the diaphanous mantle of Fancy.

We were fortunate enough to count in our letters of the second half of last century a writer who, owing his entire intellectual formation to European influences—and they can be perfectly traced through his work—was, nevertheless, genuinely national. I refer to Machado de Assis, whose noble life—the life of a man exclusively devoted to literary pursuits and only using them for generous aims, without ever listening to base suggestions—it was my privilege to describe at the Sorbonne, at a session presided over by Anatole France and dedicated to his memory.

A literature deserves, I believe, the name, when it is able to amalgamate the general tendencies of human intellect with its own national characteristics, the universal ideas with its particular sentiments. Machado de Assis was a poet, a novelist, and a moralist, having some of the wit of English humourists of the eighteenth century, some of the sense of compassion expressed by Dickens, some of the delicate, spiritual irony which pervades all French literature, and yet remaining Brazilian in all his ways and feelings through the creations of his imagination, as well as through the vibrations of his sensibility. He even displays a local feature so marked that his heroines are purely from Rio de Janeiro; there is nothing foreign or provincial about them. In France they would have been Parisians.

I do not wish to keep you very long, so I have chosen from this author just a sonnet called "Vicious Circle," which may, perhaps, convey to you an idea of his graceful philosophy. The translation, like the others, is by Victor Orban.

MACHADO DE ASSIS: 'CERCLE VICIEUX.'

" Se balançant dans l'air, une luciole ne cessait de gémir :
 ' Que je voudrais être la blonde étoile qui scintille là-haut
 dans l'éternel azur ! '

" Et l'étoile, toisant la lune, songeait avec jalouise :
 ' Que je voudrais ressembler à l'astre dont la transparente,
 lumière bleue baigne mollement le contour de la colonne
 grecque ou de la fenêtre gothique, et que la femme belle et
 aimée contemple en soupirant ! '

" Et la lune, lorgnant le soleil, se disait avec amertume :
 ' Que je suis malheureuse ! que je voudrais posséder cette
 immense, cette immortelle clarté en laquelle toute lumière
 se résume ! '

" Mais le soleil, inclinant sa couronne resplendissante,
 soupirait à son tour : ' Elle me pèse, cette brillante auréole
 divine . . . Elle m'ennuie, cette immense voûte étoilée
 . . . Hèlas ! que ne suis-je né simple luciole ? ' "

CIRCULO VICIOSO.*

Bailando no ar, gemia inquieto vagalume :
 " Quem me dera que fosse aquella loura estrella,
 Que arde no eterno azul, como uma eterna vela ! "
 Mas a estrella, fitando a lua, com ciúme :

" Pudesse en copiar o transparente lume,
 Que da grega columna á gothica janella,
 Contemplou, suspirosa, a fronte amada e bella ! "
 Mas a lua, fitando o sol, com azedume :

* Machado de Assis, 'Poesias completas (Occidentaes),' H. Garnier, editor, p. 292.

“ Misera ! tivesse en aquella enorme, aquella
 Claridade imortal, que toda a luz resume ! ”
 Mas o sol, inclinando a rutila capella :

“ Pesa-me esta brilhante aureola de nome
 Enfara-me esta azu e desmedida umbella
 Porque não nasci eu um simples vagalume ? ”

Before closing the series of these examples brought here to justify my words, I want, however, to read to you a page of one of our prose writers of to-day—Mr. Affonso Arinos, a man of my generation. You will see by it how the love of the past has outgrown in Brazil its romantic phase, and entered into a full intimate combination with the sense of reality and the confidence in the future of our destiny, thus blending together all possible features of mental life and moulding a collective, a Brazilian soul.

AFFONSO ARINOS : ‘ BURITY PERDU.’

“ Vieux palmier solitaire, témoin survivant du drame de la conquête, que de majesté et de tristesse n’exprimes-tu pas, vénérable épomme des champs !

“ Au milieu de la verte campagne, d’un vert pâle et mélancolique, où scintillent parfois les petites fleurs dorées du romarin champêtre, tu te dresses orgueilleux, levant au ciel tes palmes immobiles,—vieux guerrier pétrifié au milieu de la lutte !

“ Tu m’apparaîs comme le poème vivant d’une race presque éteinte, comme la chanson douloureuse des tribus opprimées, comme l’hymne glorieux de leurs hauts faits, comme la narration émue des combats contre les hommes venus d’an delà de l’Océan !

“ Pourquoi es-tu resté debout, quand tes contemporains gisent déjà renversés ?

“ Les rapsodes anciens et la légende pleine de poésie du chanteur aveugle de l'*Illiade* ne nous émeuvent pas plus que toi, végétal antique, chanteur muet de la vie primitive des *sertões* !

“ Vigie grandiose des champs et des forêts—près de toi paissent, tranquilles, le tanreau sauvage et les poulains légers qui ne connaissent pas le jong de l'homme.

“ Ils sont tes compagnons, de temps en temps, les noirs canards sauvages qui arrivent des lacs lointains, en quête d'autres lacs plus calmes et plus solitaires, et que tu domines, vieux palmier, de ton front haut, paisible et majestueux comme celui d'un guerrier pétrifié.

“ Les troupeaux de sangliers sauvages traversent la campagne, et passant près de toi, peut-être à cause du sifflement du vent à travers tes palmes, renâclent et grincent des dents furieusement, imitant le roulement des tambours de guerre. . . .

“ Près de toi, la nuit, quand les autres animaux dorment, passe le *canguçu* en chasse ; lorsqu'il revient, la chair du rat sauvage lui ensanglante le gosier, et sa marche est plus lente.

“ Peut-être elles ont passé près de toi, il y a deux siècles, les premières bandes d'envahisseurs ; le guerrier *tupy*, esclave de ceux de Piratininga, s'est arrêté alors en extase devant le vieux palmier et s'est rappelé les temps de son indépendance, quand les tribus nomades erraient libres à travers ce pays.

“ Poète des déserts, chanteur muet de la nature vierge des *sertões*, évoqué !

“ Des générations et des générations passeront encore avant que ton stipe gris et squameux soit desséché.

“ Le pays qui t'environne et les champs adjacents ont pris ton nom, ô épynome, et le conserveront.

“ Si un jour la civilisation gagne ces lointains parages, peut-être une grande ville se dressera dans la campagne immense qui s'étend à tes pieds, vieux Burity Perdu. Alors, comme les hoplites athéniens, captifs à Syracuse,

qui conquirent la liberté en attendrissant leurs durs seigneurs par la narration de leurs propres malheurs dans les vers sublimes d'Euripide, tu empêcheras, poète des déserts, ta propre destruction, en rachetant ta vie par la poésie sauvage et douloureuse que tu sais si bien communiquer.

“Alors, peut-être, une âme éprise des légendes primitives, une âme que tu auras poussée à l'amour et à la poésie, te sauvera de la destruction et te fera figurer sur une large place, comme un monument dédié aux générations disparues, comme une page toujours ouverte d'un poème qui n'a pas été écrit, mais qui fermente dans l'esprit de chacun des enfants de ce pays.”

Could, however, a purely Brazilian soul exist? Joaquim Nabuco, whom some of you may have known, as he was Brazilian Minister to the Court of St. James, and before that was connected with the Anti-Slavery Society, wrote a most beautiful page on the European soul of the American—he meant the Anglo-Saxon-American as well as the Latin-American,—whose imagination was bound to be European, and in this way harked back to the oldest civilisation. The patrimony of language, religion, art, law, and poetry—in a word, the patrimony of culture—is only one for Europeans and Americans, and this is the true reason why so many of us prefer to live in Europe. It is not a matter of snobbishness, nor thirst of pleasure, nor simply because comfort is better understood here. We act under the pressure of affinities which may have been neglected, but have not disappeared.

As Joaquim Nabuco stated in his remarkable essay, while in America we miss the historical back-

ground, let us say, the world, in Europe we miss the mother country, the portion of the world which is ours. Yet he said he would himself give up all the forests of the Amazon and all the pampas of the Argentine for a section of the Via Appia, a turn of the Salerno Road at Amalfi, or one of the *quais* of Paris shaded by the old Louvre. All the rest, beautiful as Nature may be over there, is like the terrestrial paradise before the first tears of man, a kind of kindergarten where mankind, forgotten of its past, severed from its ideas, tries to spell again what it had learned once under the serene sky of Attica.

Brazilian literature is, taking it in its entirety, a chapter of European literature, which has, though, assumed under a different sky a peculiar aspect that makes it national without sacrificing the common essence. I should feel very glad if I have been able to impart to you this impression.

The honour bestowed upon me by the Royal Society of Literature in receiving me as an Honorary Foreign Fellow—I could not think of any that would please me better or make me prouder—is really bestowed upon the literature which you have anticipated so congenial, so much in touch with your own, with all that may be called, in spite of divisions and dislikes of a day or even of a century, European, which means high-minded, progressive, and moral.

THE CULT OF THE CHILD-SPIRIT IN MODERN LITERATURE.

BY MISS ALICE LAW, F.R.S.L.

[Read January 27th, 1915.]

It can scarcely have escaped notice how many distinguished writers of our day have, in the plenitude of their powers and genius, broken off, as it were, from their more serious labours, and occupied themselves with the writing of *Fairy Tales* and stories for children. To quote only a few instances, and those the best known, we have the late Mr. Andrew Lang's books of Fairy Tales, Sir James Barrie's 'Peter Pan,' Mr. Kipling's 'Puck of Pook's Hill,' Mrs. Peabody's 'Piper,' and Mr. Maeterlinck's famous 'Blue-Bird.' In another language, we might perhaps add M. Rostand's 'Chanticler' to the same category, though we can scarcely suppose it to have been written for the children.

In an age as material as ours, this deliberate return to what might be termed "the cult of the child-spirit" tempts one to inquire what may be the inward significance of so interesting and singular a revival. But first it will perhaps be helpful to define what meaning it is proposed to attach to a phrase that, on the face of it, seems to require but little explanation, and further to examine briefly

how far this spirit can be traced as a definite stream of tendency in the previous periods of our literature.

Primarily, then, the child-spirit is defined as the spirit of youth, the impulsive joy of a young thing in being alive, a joy prompting the wild, ecstatic gambol of the colt, the lamb, the kid, or the mad antics of the kitten playing with its own tail. It is the intoxication bred from sheer joy of living, a Spring madness, the upwelling of bubbling joy in the heart and mind of those newly arrived in a world where all is yet delight, a world in which the very shadows are things to play with and dance over! And with this joy is associated that condition of simple guilelessness which takes it for granted that this state of things will always continue, that food, warmth, shelter, and love will always be afforded it, that there can be nothing to be afraid of. Primarily, therefore, the child-spirit is the spirit of joy, innocence, fearlessness, and trustful love: these are the gifts which endow the mind of a young child, and it is only upon further acquaintance with a world of harsher things that these exquisite qualities become partly or wholly modified.

Far be it from me to suggest that appreciation of these qualities is confined to the modern world, or that a Paganism which has bequeathed to us so famous and beautiful a saying as “*Maxima debetur reverentia pueris*” could have failed to appreciate the child. But, whereas the Pagan child was taught to aspire to the splendid virility of the man, the Christian man was taught that except he humbled himself and became—in spirit—as a little child,

his maturity availed him nothing. This great Christian paradox was a hard saying to the Pagan world, and, as we know, to the Greeks it was foolishness. Joyous simplicity they knew, and grace and beauty, but that guilelessness should be required from a full-grown man was a thing undreamt of in their philosophy.* What they failed to comprehend in this astonishing Christian doctrine was the spiritual significance of the child, the Christian conception of it as the embodiment of a Heavenly spirit, a being fresh from Paradise, where, as Christ said, "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father Which is in Heaven." To the Christian Church, therefore, the child was, from earliest times, not merely a witness to the joys of earth, but, above all, a living, ever-present symbol of the heavenly.

The child-spirit in literature, then, is the spirit which takes account of all these qualities, as it is also the spirit which mourns and compassionates all wrongs done against them. It is a romantic spirit which looks at life in the golden light of the ideal, and which, therefore, cannot endure that a story should end unhappily. It is the spirit of pure love, free from all taint of earthly passion, the spirit that makes for happiness rather than for misery, the spirit that might be defined as the feminine in contrast to the masculine influence in the world, that makes for peace rather than for war, for

* A kind critic has drawn my attention to the writings of Epictetus. I am aware how wonderfully near he frequently approaches the Christian standpoint in many respects, though it is just possible that some of his views were adopted from the environment that must have surrounded a Pagan who wrote nearly one hundred years after the birth of Christ.

healing rather than for wounding, for love rather than for hate, for pity and compassion rather than for ferocity and persecution—in a word, the *angelic* spirit in literature. There have been, of course, many varying manifestations of this spirit from the dawn of our literature to the present day. In that earliest period it was quite naturally in evidence as a credulous acceptance of the marvellous, in the recital of contests with dragons and wizards, and in all manner of wondrous Folk-lore, told to a nation that was as yet mentally a child, bound in the swaddling bands of ignorance and superstition. And, in a sense, how well for us that it was so bound! How else should we have had preserved to us all that exquisite store of legend and fairy lore which, like a delicate and fair embroidery, has enriched English and Celtic literature from the time of Layamon to Shakespeare. But with this particular manifestation of it I do not propose to deal here, inasmuch as Mr. Floris Delattre has so recently and ably treated the subject in his illuminating essay on “English Fairy Poetry.”* The cult of the marvellous, as such, being therefore put aside, it is not till we come to the fourteenth century that we meet with the first conscious workings of the child-spirit, both as a spirit revelling in the joy of life and of Nature—for all Nature lyrics are in their very essence the product of the child-heart—and the spirit inciting us to pity for beauty and innocence in distress.

Chaucer was, as everybody knows, deeply influenced by foreign schools of poetry: his “Patient

* Henry Froude.

"Griselda" was confessedly taken from Petrarch, and many of his other love stories had their origin in the Troubadour lays and romances then current in France, Italy and Provence. Among these it is more than probable that he was acquainted with what Mr. Joseph Jacobs, in his Introduction to 'English Fairy Tales,' calls "the most illustrious example in literature" of the *cante fable*; this is, of course, 'Aucassin et Nicolette,' a legend which one of its latest and not least able translators, Mr. Harold Child,* in his finely written and sympathetic preface, styles "The best love story in the world." And so it is. It is scarcely too much to say that in this lovely, imaginative creation of the Middle Ages we find illustrated all the most tender qualities of the child-spirit, alike in the joyous youth and purity of the lovers, their unworldly scorn of all material considerations of rank or wealth, their high-bred candour, the flashing directness of their indignation when they are deceived (as in Aucassin's reply to his father's treachery), their *naïveté* in taking every one they meet into their confidence, and in appealing not to the wise "grown-ups" of the world, but to the forest children for help in finding one another! Lastly we come to the happy ending of all their trials, and their absolute content with one another when found: "They kissed and embraced each other, and fair was their joy."

With such an example before him it was not difficult for the genius of Chaucer to adapt himself to the expression of the child-spirit, to that joyous revelling in the delights of youth and love and

* Adam and Charles Black.

spring which breathes through all his pages, particularly in the Prologue to the ‘Canterbury Tales’—stories which, for all their occasional grossness, are appealing not on the score of their broad humanity merely, but by their delicate pity for the frailty of unprotected womanhood and innocence in distress. Who, for instance, can read unmoved the prayer of the much- and long-tried Custance to the Virgin Mary?—

“Thou sawe thy child y-slaye biforne thyne eyen,
And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay!
Now, lady bright, to whom alle woeful cryen,
Thow glorie of womanhede, thow faire May,
Thou haven of refut, brighte sterre of day,
Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse
Rewest on every reweful in distresse.”

Or that piteous account of the little murdered child—St. Hugh, of Lincoln—in the Prioress’s tale, the little boy, who, out of love to the Virgin, learned the Latin hymn to sing it to her honour, and so met his death? Or, again, the story of Griselda already referred to? But, indeed, all the influence of the Pre-Renaissance literature—whether at home or abroad—was thrown into the scale on behalf of pity and purity. The writings of Dante himself are the outstanding illustration of this, and his image of Beatrice, the angelic presence ever urging him to the contemplation of the Heavenly, was outlined by the last upward flame of those intensely burning spiritual fires which the Pagan influences of the Renaissance extinguished.

In England, the encounter of the rival spirits of

the Renaissance and the Reformation left the issue doubtful. The Reformers had the balance of power for a time, but they had not counted on the virility of a nation galvanised to fresh activity by the accession of a youthful Queen, who was a very half-hearted Puritan at best, and who delighted in gaiety and adulation. The key-note of the Elizabethan period was “Joy.” For the moment, pity and compassion were forgotten. Spenser, it is true, harked back to the Pre-Renaissance spirit, modelling himself upon his mighty predecessor—but Spenser was somewhat out of touch with his age, and in his pages it must be admitted that the child-spirit is strained till it becomes wearisome, so that we turn gratefully to Shakespeare’s humour for relief. Shakespeare uses the pathetic appeal with the utmost reserve, knowing it, when judiciously introduced, to be one of the finest appeals in literature. How, for example, does the passionate lament of Constance for her son lighten the murderous gloom of “King John”?—

“Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
 Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
 Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
 Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
 Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.”

Or, among other exquisite passages, there at once recurs to us the lovely dirge for the supposed dead Imogen: “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun,” lines too familiar to need quotation. And, indeed, quotation from such inexhaustible sources of beauty would be almost invidious, where all is beauty.

In his experiments with the romantic love story

Shakespeare, as in every other kind of situation, takes a line of his own. He will have none of the sugared, happy ending. In "Romeo and Juliet," for example, everything goes as contrarily as it can, and in other groupings of character study he seems to take a comical delight in bewildering us with the most unexpected assembly of qualities. Where, for instance, should we be less likely to look for and find the promptings of the child-spirit in its aspect of gentle guilelessness—we do not say of innocence—than in Falstaff? And yet if Shakespeare ever endowed any adult human being with this quality it was surely this gross, but withal, gentle-hearted and continually outwitted old man, whose transparent attempts to screen his own failures resemble nothing so much as the comical attempt of a child to hide itself when it is in full view! Then his implicit belief in the Prince,—the false Prince who treated him always with such open, gibing contempt, and in the end so scurvily—his pathetic conviction that the young King would, at his accession, load him with dignities and honours, believing even that the cruel, public reproof administered by Henry is but a necessary show to the world, and that he will "be sent for in private to him," whereas, alas, the only sending was to prison; to what does all this point if not to the guileless simplicity of the child-heart? A less tender, less trusting nature would have brazened the situation out, but the rebuff—when he really understood its meaning—was too much for simple-minded Falstaff; how else should it have been said of him when he lay a-dying: "The King hath killed his heart."

Other great Elizabethans give us touches of the child-spirit, as does Ben Jonson, in some joyous song or tender epitaph, as in the one to his own child. Milton, though loftily austere, could raise the paeon to innocent joy, as in his "L'Allegro," or celebrate, as in "Comus," the pity of ensnared chastity. Through his religious sense, too, he was able to realise all the heavenly aspect of the child, as witness his "Lines on the Death of a Fair Infant."

The post-Elizabethan dramatists were, for the most part, of a totally different spirit, yet before the great age of poetry was to pass away, there was one singer whose inspiration was of the dews of morning; in the poetry of Robert Herrick the child-spirit shines as clear as the sun in an April sky.

Herrick's plea is for joy; joy in everything, in love, in life, in nature, in innocence, and, above all, in youth. He is conscious of the shadow creeping insidiously over the dial face, of the inevitable decay that awaits even youth and beauty, hence his urging "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," his impatience for Corinna to go a Maying, his pleading to daffodils to "Stay, stay!" his compassion for all frail blossoms—whether of flowers or human life—that fall before their time, as in his lines "Upon a Child that died":

"Here she lies, a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood :
Who as soon fell fast asleep
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her."

With the Restoration came the departure of the child-spirit, and with it the departure for nearly a century of the lyrical impulse in poetry. The next manifestations of it must be looked for in another direction.

At the opening of the seventeenth century, one of its most delicate prose writers, Bishop Earle, put into a few golden sentences all that Christianity most reverences in the idea of the child :

“*A child* is a man in a small letter. . . . His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world. . . . He is purely happy, because he knows no evil. . . . Hee kisses and loves all. And, when the smart of the rod is past, smiles on his bearer. The elder hee grows hee is a staire lower from God. Hee is the Christian’s example, and the old man’s relapse. The one imitates his pureness, the other his simplicity. Could hee put off his body with his little coate, hee had got eternitie without a burthen, and exchanged but one Heaven for another.”

It is probable that the good Bishop was somewhat unique in his love for children, for the age in which he lived, or at least the one which closely followed him, was remarkable for nothing so much as its suppression of the child. Mrs. Meynell, in her charming book on ‘Children,’* has laid stress upon the contempt and impatience with which the grown men of the late Stuart period regarded the years of infancy, and quotes the case of Evelyn, who, in his haste to force his son’s mind to maturity before its time, could boast that “At two and a half years of age he pronounced English, Latin, and French

* John Lane.

exactly, and could perfectly read in these three languages."

It is scarcely wonderful that this amazing infant died at the age of five. But, as Mrs. Meynell adds at the close of this pathetic chapter: "Impatience of the way and the wayfaring was to disappear from a later century—an age that has found all things to be on a journey, and all things complete in their day because it was their day and had its appointed end. It is the tardy conviction of this," she goes on to say, "rather than a sentiment ready-made, that has caused the childhood of children to seem at last something else than a defect."

Yet, despite its marked antipathy to childhood, the so-called "Age of Reason" was not left wholly without witness to the workings of the child-spirit. To its impulsive promptings in the hearts of some of the greatest men of the eighteenth century we owe many of the finest literary creations in prose of which that or any other period can boast. It certainly inspired all the delicate and tender creations of Addison—his "Will Wimble," his "Parish Clergyman," and "Sir Roger"; to it we owe the heart-breaking story of "Clarissa Harlowe"; it was this that illumined the finest passages of Sterne and that moved him to the delineation of "Corporal Trim" and "Uncle Toby," and it shone openly, like the sun at noonday, in the pages, as we know it did in the heart, of immortal Oliver Goldsmith.

A quiet and general reaction in favour of children was setting in before the close of the eighteenth century, and with the advent of the nineteenth came the complete emancipation of the child from the

tyranny of the age of Buckram and Reason. It became the fashion for beautiful women to be painted in the graceful pose of motherhood ; one recalls many such groupings by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney, and the well-known partiality of Sir Joshua for child studies may have had an influence upon the times. But what had even more influence, probably, was the work and writings of a gifted genius and brother artist. All my hearers will probably agree in ascribing to William Blake the first fresh lyrical outburst of the child-spirit. No writer, either before or since, has been so absolutely identified with that spirit in its aspect of the heavenly as was this delicate poet-artist. To Blake children were beings from another world—spirits floating halfway between earth and heaven : “On a cloud I saw a child,” he sings, and this was how he chiefly saw them. If freshly alighted on earth, he saw them in close and loving companionship with all other young, innocent, newborn things. We hear their soft lispings :

“ Little lamb, who made thee ?
Dost thou know who made thee ? ”

Or again, elsewhere, it is—

“ Little lamb
Here I am ;
Come and lick,
My white neck ;
Let me pull
Your soft wool ;
Let me kiss
Your soft face.”

After Blake other poets seem at first to tread somewhat heavily, but, among many others, whom exigencies of space preclude us from mentioning, there was one great man, one of the greatest, who, likewise possessing the child-heart, gave himself up to the revelation of it in some of the simplest, and yet grandest, poetic imagery ever known. Of William Wordsworth it may be said that no man of similar intellectual stature has ever bared the head with such reverence before the child, or stooped so lovingly to lift and glorify it! He, like Blake, stood breathlessly before that image of the heavenly, believing that—

“Trailing clouds of glory do we come,
From God that is our home.”

In the most simple, yet exquisite, similes he expresses his almost overwhelming sense of child innocence and beauty. Who else could have conceived that description of Nature’s promised gifts to Lucy, culminating in those perfect lines which seem to touch the summit of lyric achievement:

“And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.”

Coincident almost with the revival of interest in the qualities of the child came the writings of Jean Paul Richter—that simple-hearted philosopher, and in 1811 came the publication of the ‘Fairy Tales’ collected with such care and accuracy by the brothers Grimm. These, however, were not available in English till a dozen years later, when they were

translated by Mr. Edgar Taylor, and illustrated by Cruikshank. In the forties Hans Anderson came into the field with his Danish ‘Fairy Stories,’ not issued as folk-lore merely, but addressed by a grown-up child to children, and from this time onward the output of this kind of literature increased amazingly. The happy domestic life of the young Queen was an additional incentive to the publication of appeals on behalf of the little ones, and if the Victorian era had been great in no other respect, it would have won illustrious immortality by its rescue of and interest in the child. The most distinguished writers of the day threw themselves with ardour into the cause, and by every known art of prose or verse, pleaded for compassion on the innocents. Everyone knows the effect produced by Mrs. Browning’s “Cry of the Children,” as of Charlotte Brontë’s attack on the miseries of charity schools. Dickens—that literary knight-errant—threw himself with ardour into the fray, and many of his pages are saturated with the pathos he evokes at the recital of the wrongs to which little stray children are so often exposed. Thackeray, while probably feeling no less keenly on the subject, went to work in a totally different fashion. With that quiet sense of restraint, which ignorant critics have dubbed “cynicism,” he attained the same end—the plea for the child-heart—by exposing the contemptible emptiness of those who, like Becky Sharp or Beatrix Esmond, never sought to possess it. And so he gave it to Esmond and Colonel Newcome and Captain Dobbin instead.

Other prominent writers of the sixties threw themselves with enthusiasm into the study and education of the child. Ruskin, for one, and, needless to say, Charles Kingsley, who, impatient of any other audience, addressed himself directly to the child in the person of his own son, to whom he dedicated his immortal ‘Water Babies.’ But the tendency was at this time to overdo the instruction, and against this Ruskin, in his introduction to a fresh edition of Grimm, that of 1868, protested strongly. By the close of the seventies, however, the movement on behalf of the child-spirit was, as a serious influence, spent; it had achieved its purpose, and there was no longer any need for further exhortation of the public to care for children, when everyone was caring.

Public attention was by this time concentrated on other matters, and many of the great Mid-Victorians, such as Carlyle, Macaulay, Froude, Tennyson, Browning, George Eliot, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, and Matthew Arnold, were too much occupied with the problems of science, ethics, or divinity to inquire further about the child. And for that time it is probable the enthusiasm had gone far enough. Just as the witty James Smith, in his amusing caricature of Wordsworth—“The Baby’s *Début*”—held up the warning that simplicity might merge into foolishness, so now, at the close of the Mid-Victorian era, a great and delicate humorist rescued the child-sentiment from degenerating into mawkish priggishness.

In ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’ and ‘Through the Looking-Glass,’ Louis Carroll ridi-

culled the well-meant but over-done ponderosity of the Kingsley school, that was always inculcating a moral lesson, and completely laughed it out of court. Following the immortal nonsense of Louis Carroll and of Edward Lear, whose Nonsense Books also appeared in the sixties and seventies, came what might perhaps be termed the Mrs. Ewing and Kate Greenaway period, which effectually tided us over the eighties, and landed us on the threshold of that *fin-de-siècle-ism* which occupied all serious writers till the opening of the present century.

If, during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the child-spirit ceased to be a dominant influence in our literature, the reason may possibly be found in the influence of the Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and even Matthew Arnold "seriousness," as also in the increasing influx of foreign literature, which last, being mainly the literature of sexual passion, tended gradually towards a gross and decadent animalism from which all its superb and finished art could not save it. Literature of this character is of necessity hostile to the child-spirit, with which it has nothing in common, knowing nothing either of purity or innocence. In proportion, therefore, as the influence of French and Italian literature of this kind was paramount during the last decades of the nineteenth century, that of the child-spirit waned, and nothing seemed less probable than the renaissance of it, which was already at hand. The great novelists, Hardy and Meredith, did little for it, though Meredith certainly gave us refreshing studies of the boy in 'Crossjay' and 'Richard Feverel.' Miss Broughton, however, that brilliant and

humorous writer, never let escape the opportunity of introducing delightful studies of children, who, indeed, are continually threaded like some delicate flower embroidery into the woven fabric of her work. The fairy tale, too, though relegated to a lower literary plane than formerly, had persisted. Thanks to the indefatigable labours of Mr. Andrew Lang,* Mr. Quiller-Couch,† Mr. Joseph Jacobs,‡ Mr. Lawrence Housman,§ and Mr. W. B. Yeats,|| many volumes of fairy lore enlivened the nineties, and, in his learned introduction to Miss Hunt's fresh translation of 'Grimm,'¶ Mr. Lang went over the whole ground of the origins of the fairy story and its relation to the higher myths. But the actual revival of the spirit came from another Scotchman, the writer who never lost the brave, bright heart of a boy—Robert Louis Stevenson, and in co-operation with him, though by different methods, we got the brilliant and gifted author of 'Peter Pan' and the famous Thrums stories, including his inimitable 'Sentimental Tommy'—stories, indeed, in which the child-spirit shines clear on every page.

Sir James Barrie and Mr. Kipling invent their own fairy tales; other writers give us translations or adaptations of fairy legend. Fouqué's 'Undine' was unknown in English till 1845, and some years ago Dr. W. L. Courtney revived our interest by issuing his

* 'Green Fairy Book,' 1892; other Fairy Books, 1894, 1897, 1900, 1901.

† Cassell & Co.

‡ David Nutt.

§ 'The Blue Moon' (Murray); 'A Farm in Fairy Land' (Kegan Paul).

|| 'Irish Fairy Tales' (Walter Scott).

¶ Bell (1884).

beautiful and spirited dramatic version of the story.* In 1905, Ibsen's 'Wild Duck' was played in London by the Granville-Barker company, and their fine rendering of the piece brought out in all its intensity the piteous immolation of the child on the altar of parental selfishness and sin. In 1910-11, we had Mrs. Peabody's exquisite version of 'The Piper,' and following this came M. Rostand's 'Chanticler' and Mr. Maeterlinck's famous 'Blue Bird.'

There is, of course, an order of mind that in the pride of its supposed maturity is impatient of fairy stories, and sees in them nothing better than foolish nonsense. Yet, this opinion notwithstanding, it seems unreasonable to suppose that so many distinguished writers as those already referred to—a by no means exclusive list—would have so continually returned to the fairy story unless there was something in it that particularly attracted them, something beyond the obvious.

What, then, it may be asked, are those inner attractions of the fairy story which have so appealed to all those varied writers? The outward characteristic of the fairy tale is plain enough to see, and might, in a general way, be summed up as improbability! But, what is the *primary* basis of the fairy story?

Perhaps the best and most direct answer would be "Other-Worldliness." Everything in the recital is "topsy-turvy" in relation to the happenings of life as we know it. It is pure romance. Virtue, for instance, is always rewarded and vice punished. The awardings of child-justice are very simple and

* 'Fortnightly Review,' June, 1902.

direct: the hero or heroine is always rescued and victorious, and the villain is even made to dictate his own punishment, though in the naivest manner, and without realising that his sentence is directed against himself! There is also a refreshing absence of "squeamish" pity for the criminal, such as too often disgraces our latter-day civilisation: no one *ought* to do wrong, according to the child code, but having done so, they must suffer the penalty. This is the return to the inexorableness of the natural law, but it is a sound and healthy maxim, as Kingsley saw, when he introduced his "Mrs. Beddone-by-as-you-did" in the 'Water-Babies.' The fairy tale is likewise arbitrary in its social arrangements: it is despotic and democratic in a breath. The prince marries the charcoal-burner's daughter, or, the princess, as in Mr. Lawrence Housman's 'Blue Moon,' waits for the peasant, and elopes with him, wooden shoes and all! There is, indeed, a most refreshing air of social ease, absence of ceremonial restraint and of snobbery about the atmosphere of the fairy tale that is revivifying and vitalising to an extreme degree. It is like leaving the heavy, stifling closeness of some gambling saloon to meet the dew of the morning, like the refreshment of an early swim following a sleepless night, or like a bath in some crystal mountain pool after toiling amid the busy, dusty thoroughfares of a great city. It affords the relief of a complete change of environment: we enter a world that, like Looking-glass Land, is entirely the reverse of ours. Everything in it is "topsy-turvy" according to our notions, but even this suggests reflection: what if the fairy tale

were right after all! What if this should be the better order of things! What could be better devised than that the Prince should find his Princess, and, like Aucassin and Nicolete, live happy ever after! Surely all of us would be glad to do this. Lewis Carroll was perhaps not altogether fooling when he invented Looking-glass Land, and, in the words of Alice, was “sure it’s got, oh! such beautiful things in it!”

Then, again, the fairy story is a relief from decadence by reason of its complete lack of passion. Every prince in it is, like Aucassin, seeking his “most sweet love,” “the thing in all the world that he loves best,” but it is the pure and exquisite love of the realm of faerie and of child innocence, far removed from all gross, personal self-seeking. It is the idyllic love of poesie, the eternal yearning towards one another of the youth and the maiden :

“ More happy love ! more happy, happy love !
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed.
For ever panting and for ever young ;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead and a parched tongue.”

The fairy tale, again, ignores all the complications of life ; it has no half-tones ; everything in it is usually directly downright, black or white. Everybody is either bad or good. The moral of it is always : “Do right, and no evil shall happen unto thee.” Evil does, of course, happen in a sense—and in this respect the fairy tale is a reflection of life as most of us know it—but there is no permanent

ill, and the hero and heroine are always rescued just at the fatal moment, even though actually bound to the faggots of the stake! At the dramatic minute the Swan brothers appear, and all is made right. In the same way, in Mr. Housman's 'Way of the Wind,' the heroine is saved at the very moment when all seemed lost. In this respect we notice what might be termed a refreshing tone of brisk, American optimism about the fairy tale; the hero and heroine have just *got* to worry through—that's what they are there for!

Another marked and deeply appealing characteristic is that the fairy tale, like Christianity, is always on the side of the weak against the strong. It takes the weak things of the world wherewith to confound the world. It is the poor, despised things of the earth that conquer—the stupid, simple-minded Hans, the younger son, the fool of the family, the ugly duckling! These are they who triumph in the fairy tale, because the child-heart will have it so. Pride is invariably punished and sterling worth and humility rewarded. The virtues of co-operation, as among the animals, and of good-fellowship in men are everywhere inculcated. Kindness to animals is, furthermore, enjoined, and the gratefulness of animals is illustrated with emphasis. Here Mr. Maeterlinck parts company, for, although he has glorified the fidelity of the dog, he represents the cat and all other animals as inimical to man. But in most respects he is in perfect accord. Another special feature of the fairy tale is the suggestion of rare and beautiful ideas, as when, for instance, the emperor—whom all believed to be at death's door—

is cured by the song of a nightingale; or again, where, in the case of a princess who is cast under a spell, she could only be disenchanted by one who was pure of heart; or again, as signifying the transparent truthfulness of a child, it was only the child who admitted that the emperor was wearing the no clothes, when all his courtiers, to please him, professed that he was wearing the magical garments! So, in Mr. Maeterlinck's 'Blue Bird,' we have those exquisite suggestions about the dead only living in the memory of the living, or about the bird of happiness dwelling with night, unable to face the day, or being found only in the kingdom of the future. In his boy hero, Tyltyl, Mr. Maeterlinck has given us a wonderful and unique creation; he is the very personification of the Fairy Prince of Story, taking all adventures, and even terrors, jauntily, just as they come, never much impressed, or at least never letting it be seen that he is afraid, conscious that he has a great part to play, and fearlessly assuming on every occasion a natural leadership over everything and everybody. He knows no fear, possibly because he has no imagination, but in the most trying circumstances he never loses his head: he is calm and intrepid, courteous and gallant in a breath, and yet one never feels him to be anything but natural—the living personification of the breathing, human boy. In the creation of Tyltyl Mr. Maeterlinck has even surpassed himself, for he has revealed to us how all heroism is of the child-spirit: the spirit that—however much afraid—does not stop to calculate, or weigh the danger, but fearlessly goes straight on.

Sir James Barrie, of course, gives us much the same kind of hero in ‘Peter Pan,’ but though the charm is undoubtedly there, Peter, being more of a sprite than a human boy, does not appeal to us in quite the same human way as Tyltyl.

From Mrs. Peabody’s ‘Piper’ we glean many exquisite thoughts about children. Answering his own query, “What’s that creature that they call a child?” he says: “They are the brightest miracle I know. Wherever I go, I search the eyes of men to find such clearness—and it is not there.” All his indignation is kept for the wrongs done to these beautiful ones; he is wrathful for their “trodden wings.”

Wings! This is, above all, the hall-mark of the fairy tale. It is always occupied with birds, and here Mr. Maeterlinck, Sir J. Barrie, and M. Rostand are all at one in their use of and idealisation of birds. Heroines are served by them, carried aloft by them, as Wendy was, or changed into them like the enchanted princess in the German tale, who was turned into a nightingale, or they are employed, as by M. Rostand, to represent human characters, or, as by Mr. Maeterlinck, to signify certain qualities—“happiness,” for instance—just as in the old German fairy tale, the bird of Paradise, which appeared in the garden, turned out to be the winged imagination—phantasy! But, through it all the dominant idea is ‘Wings!’ Wings as a means of elevation from earth, of escape to another world; Wings wherewith to elude pursuit, the pursuit of the materialism which can run its quarry to earth, but cannot pursue it in the heavens. Thus

the bird, like the child, is used as a symbol of the heavenly: *ubi aves ibi angeli*. It is in this respect a symbol of the soul.

In some of the fairy tales, notably in that of ‘The Mermaid’ and in ‘Undine,’ as rendered by Dr. Courtney, this symbolism is abandoned for a direct narrative of the search for the attainment of a human soul. The vital teaching of ‘Undine’ is that a soul can only be acquired by love—that *love begets the soul*. The thought is also brought out that love can only be retained by love, and emphasises the desperate condition of those who, like Huldbrand, seek to recapture a love they have taken so little trouble to cherish. There is the old inexorableness of the fairy tale about it too—the inevitable price to be paid for evil-doing. Only by death was Huldbrand rewarded with the love which he had discovered was more to him than life.

From this beautiful story, as from a study of the ‘Blue Bird,’ and the ‘Piper,’ and the fairy tales, ancient or modern, already referred to, it will be seen that in going back to this species of literature modern writers have sought distraction from a world that is pressing too heavily upon us all, from a materialism that offers us no help, from a decadence that threatens with its corruption to poison the very springs of inspiration.

Fatigued with so-called realism, they have caught at the wings of the fairy tale to flee away and be mentally and spiritually at rest. They have seen its possibilities as a medium for conveying many beautiful truths, for the expression of other-worldliness, and for the illustration of all those qualities of the

child-spirit that have been the sources of finest inspiration to all great authors in the past. The great Victorians invoked the child-spirit to save the child; we have invoked it to save ourselves. And here may I be allowed to observe that possibly no more opportune or striking confirmation of all that I have been urging in this paper—as to the necessity of the child-spirit in connection with the basis of all true beauty and culture—could have been afforded than that offered in the address recently presented by English men of letters, many of them distinguished members of this Society, to their Russian colleagues, in which the following passage occurs :

“ It is at a time like this, when the material civilisation of Europe seems to have betrayed us and shown the lie at its heart, that we realise that the poets and prophets are right, and that we must, like them and like your great writers, once more see life with the simplicity of the barbarian or the child, if we are to regain our peace and freedom and build up a better civilisation on the ruins of this that is crumbling”—(‘Times’ report, December 23rd, 1914).

In the present troublous times we need all our courage, and there is, as Mr. Maeterlinck has shown us, a courage belonging to the child-heart which no mere material learning or scientific attainment can impart. We learn the same lesson from Mr. Watts’ great picture. Everything mortal shrinks before the on-coming of Death, but it is the piteously fragile figure of innocent love that boldly faces and strives to push away the shrouded figure. We go to the child, as Wordsworth did, for its redolence of the

airs of Paradise, for instruction and guidance in the way it has so recently come, for guidance to the realm of the Great Beyond.

Looking back at the course of our literary history during the past five hundred years, we see how continuously the child-spirit has pervaded it, working in it now as a secret leaven, lifting it to heights of joyful lyrical impulse—now as a hidden fire, shining from its darkest pages, glorifying it when it needed light, and creating a glow even during its most chilled and frosty period. We have likewise seen some of the greatest minds of the centuries appealing to it for guidance as we are appealing to it to-day, till we are brought to appreciate how many times in our long, literary history it has come true which was spoken by the ancient prophet: “And a little child shall lead them.”

WHY DOES SHAKESPEARE'S 'HAMLET' DIFFER FROM THE 'AMLETH' STORY OF BELLEFOREST?

BY MRS. CHARLOTTE CARMICHAEL STOPES, HON. F.R.S.L.

[Read February 24th, 1915.]

IN order fully to understand Shakespeare's work, it is necessary to study his originals, and follow his method of treating them. It is through noting the differences between what he finds and what he gives us, that we realise his genius. The delicate touches of his art in creating, through the changes he makes in his materials, "something new and strange," is nowhere more fully illustrated than in the tragedy of 'Hamlet.'

The story of Hamlet is built upon various old Irish and Icelandic Sagas. Dr. Gilbert Murray, in his "Shakespeare Lecture" last year at the British Academy, dealt with this, its place in folk-lore, and its allegorical or inner meaning. But he did not connect his theory at all with Shakespeare's play.

The Danish *Saxo Grammaticus*, some time after 1177, compiled from various sources a history of the early kings of Denmark. The story of 'Hamlet' is preserved at the end of his third book and the beginning of the fourth, as part of the story of Rorique. The third book ends with what should have been the dramatic conclusion of any play, and

the fourth book carries on the account of 'Amleth's' reign, his marriages, betrayal, defeat, and death. We cannot think that Shakespeare's studies carried him to the original Latin pages of the Danish historian. There was, however, a French sixteenth century translation, which closely followed the text, without the break which occurs in Saxo. A collection of tales and novelettes had been published by Bandello in Italian, which were partly translated into French by Boaistea and completed by François de Belleforest. The latter added some new tales, and began to publish them in Paris in 1559 under the title of 'Histoires Tragiques.' In the fifth volume (Lyons, 1576, and Paris, 1582) the third chapter contains the story of 'Amleth.' We know no English translation before Bradocke's of 1608, but some have supposed there must have been an earlier edition, so that Shakespeare might have read it. I see no difficulty in believing that Shakespeare knew French sufficiently well to have been able to read Belleforest for himself. His known friendship with Richard Field, the apprentice, son-in-law, and successor of the great French printer, Thomas Vautrollier, who was allowed to keep six foreign journeymen printers, gives us a reason to believe that the poet learned French in the Blackfriars printing house, at the same time that he was acquiring his evident intimacy with the printer's craft.

Some think there was an earlier play of 'Hamlet,' on which Shakespeare constructed his. This is an exceedingly difficult matter to decide, as there is no copy of that early forerunner extant. The belief in its existence is based on an allusion in Nash,

another in Lodge, and on a reference to the play in ‘Henslowe’s Diary.’ This belief is strengthened by the silence of Meres as to any play by Shakespeare on the subject of Hamlet. In 1598 Dr. Furnivall, in his Forewords to Mr. Grigg’s Facsimile of the 1603 quarto, accepts all the arguments in favour of the early play—*not by Shakespeare*, and disbelieves the supposition drawn from Albert Cohn’s ‘Shakespeare in Germany,’ that the early German play was a rescension of this lost pre-Shakespearean ‘Hamlet.’ While I do not profess to speak with any authority in treating early editions, I acknowledge that the arguments brought forward in this case seems to me insufficient to *prove* anything. The lost play was supposed to have been known *too early* to be attributable to Shakespeare. In his preface to Green’s ‘Menaphon’ (said by Dyce to have appeared in 1587, though no copy is extant of an earlier date than 1589), Nash writes: “It is a common practice nowadays among a sort of shifting companions that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *Noverint*, whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavours of art, that could scarcely Latinise their neck verse if they should have need: yet English Seneca, read by candle-light, yields many good sentences, as ‘Blood is a beggar,’ and so forth, and if you entreat him fair on a frosty morning, he will afford you whole Hamlets—I should say handfuls of tragical speeches.” But I do not think that Nash’s words bear the meaning which has been put into them. Read with the *context*, they are seen to refer to *translators*, not to play-writers; the “trade of Noverint”

was that of lawyer's clerks, those who followed it used the corrupt and hybrid Latin of the law courts, and it would be audacity in them, from their knowledge of legal Latin, to attempt translations from classic sources. His reference to "English Seneca" was to exclude the scholars from the field of his censure, as he was treating Heywood, Neville, Studley, Nuce, and Newton's work, rather as a set of translators, than a set of plays ; and the reference to Hamlet's tragical speeches *might* have more probably been applied to the *story*, rather than to the play, of 'Hamlet.' Nash goes on to say, "but Seneca will not last for ever . . . and these men renouncing all possibilities of credit or estimation, to intermeddle with Italian translations . . . and spende two or three hours in turning over French Doudie." He gives a long list of respectable translators, among whom appear Erasmus, Sir Thomas Eliot, Gascoigne, Turberville, Golding, Phaer, Thomas Watson, Thomas Newton, Leyland, Gabriel Harvey. Now, Nash's voice is much too uncertain to prove that there was a play of 'Hamlet' written by that date, and *therefore* too early for Shakespeare. It might have referred to the supposed early edition of Bradocke's English translation of 'Hamlet,' which was not well done. The other two references are later. On June 9th, 1594, Henslowe records in his 'Diary'—"The Lord Admiral's and the Lord Chamberlain's men . . . received at 'Hamlet' 8s." Lodge, in his 'Wit's Miserie and the World's Madnesse,' printed in 1596, describes the fiend Hate-Virtue : "He walks for the most part in black, under colour of gravity, and looks as pale as the

Vizard of ye ghost which cried so miserably at ye Theater, like an Oister wife, Hamlet, Revenge!" Now, both of these are at dates at which it was *possible* that Shakespeare *might* have himself written an early draught of 'Hamlet.' It was connected with *his company*, and *his theatre*; and it is just *possible* that Meres had not heard of that one play while he was in London.

I cannot attempt to decide that question, but it must not be forgotten that if Shakespeare did not write that early play, its author *may* have come between him and the original story, but, unless a copy should turn up, we cannot be sure even of that. Dr. Furnivall feels sure that, from its links of association with 'Julius Caesar,' Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' was sketched in 1601, entered on the Stationers' Registers in 1602, printed in a pirated and imperfect copy in 1603, (the first quarto), and corrected and completed in 1604, by Shakespeare himself (the second quarto). The entry in the Stationers' Registers of July 26th, 1602, ran: "To James Roberts, A booke, The Revenge of Hamlett Prince of Denmarke, as yt latelie was acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his servantes." The first edition which we know to have appeared after that was the 1603 edition, described on the title-page as "The tragicall History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, by William Shakespeare, As it hath beene diverse times acted by his Highnesse Servants in the citie of London; as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and elsewhere. At London, printed by Nicholas Ling and John Trundell, 1603." The name of Roberts, who had registered it, does not appear,

and this supports the presumption that it was a pirated copy, seemingly taken down in imperfect notes (sometimes out of order) from the acted performance or from the players. But it must have been taken from an earlier draught of *Shakespeare's* play. Some of the situations and some of the names are different. There was not *time* for the description on the title-page to be true, unless the "King's servants" carried over their records under their previous "master." The Chamberlain's became the King's Company only on May 17th, 1603, just about the time the players would leave London for the summer. That year was a plague year, the King did not stay much in London, and "his servants" did not play before him until December 3rd at Wilton. Apparently the piracy, if it was piracy, was compounded in the following year, when a quarto edition appeared, printed by the man who had registered it, James Roberts, for Nicholas Ling—"The Tragical Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect copie." It had fifty pages, whereas the 1603 edition had only had thirty-two; it bears traces of much further work, and shows many great improvements in the text. It is at last 'Hamlet' as we know it, and the names are those we know—Corambus has become Polonius; Leonhardus, Laertes; Rosencraft and Gilderstone become Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.* Therefore we have to realise that

* Dr. Leo discovered that there were two officials living at Shakespeare's time in Denmark bearing these names (see 'Athenaeum.' September 23rd, 1892).

before our ‘Hamlet,’ in its complete shape, came the 1603 edition by *Shakespeare*, the supposed early play *not by Shakespeare*, a supposed early *translation* of Belleforest, and Belleforest himself. I believe firmly, however, that, whether or not there was another author for this unknown play, Shakespeare went to Belleforest for his original, so that it is well to turn to the French Belleforest’s “*Histoire avec quelle ruse Amleth qui depuis fut Roy de Dannemarck vengea la mort de son père Horvendille, occis par Fengon, son frère, et autres occurrences de son histoire,*” etc. The Danish king Rorique had given the government of Jutland to a valiant man called Gervidille, at whose death succeeded his *two sons*, Horvendille and Fengon. Horvendille defeated the Norwegian king Collere (=Fortinbras), and sent most of the booty to Rorique, who thereupon gave him his daughter Geruthe in marriage. (Note that it was because of his marriage with Geruthe that Horvendille became the predominant partner or *king*.) He had one son called Amleth. Fengon, jealous of his brother’s glory, tempted his wife to do evil, formed a party against him in the State, forced a quarrel on him, and treacherously, though openly, killed Horvendille at a feast. He excused himself by saying that Horvendille was planning how to kill Geruthe, who was very much beloved by the people. “But she, who had been at first honoured for her virtues, forgot all duty, and married her husband’s brother and murderer.”

Amleth knew that Fengon would have killed him also, along with his father, but for the fear of his grandfather Rorique, so, like Brutus and David, he

feigned insanity, until he should come of age, and be able to mature his plans. His uncle, to keep him out of his sight, sent him to be in the kitchen amongst the servants. There on one occasion he gathered a bundle of faggots, and began to sharpen their points. Being asked why he did this, he answered: "To make pointed javelins to avenge the death of my father." Some of the servants told Fengon of this. He, to try whether Amleth was really mad or no, placed in the woods near him a beautiful woman, who was to tempt him by her endearments and betray him to the King. The girl had loved Amleth from her youth, and might have deceived him, had not his foster-brother Osric warned him by a sign that he was being watched. He therefore did not respond to her caresses, and that was supposed to be a true sign of madness. Fengon then pretended that he was leaving the court for a time, but he left a friend to spy on Amleth and his mother. The queen sent for Amleth to speak with her in her closet, in order to try to find out the truth about her son, and the Chamberlain hid himself behind the arras, that he might hear what was said. Amleth came in, and began crowing like a cock, and flapping his arms up and down as if they were wings, until he felt some motion behind the arras, when he plunged his sword through and struck some one. Believing it at first to have been his uncle, he dragged the spy out half dead and despatched him. Swearing his mother to secrecy he carried the body of the Chamberlain to the kitchen, put it in a cauldron, boiled it, and gave it to the pigs to eat, so that it could not be found. Then he returned and reproached his mother for

having married Fengon. He said: "I desire to take such a high vengeance that it will always be spoken of. I shall not die until I have avenged myself of my enemy, until I quit myself of the obligation laid on me. It is foolish to gather fruit before the season, but I await it. Weep not for me, but weep for yourself." But as he spoke she forgot her mortification and anxiety, for joy that her son had become so wise. She dared not lift up her eyes to his, because of her shame, remembering his father, until ere long she embraced him, and told him that he ought to consider that she had had little means of resistance, and that the treachery of the people in the palace was over all. She had never consented to the death of his father. She advised Amleth to be prudent, and not to hurry, and promised to help him. She feared that this murder of the Chamberlain would be his ruin, but she would pretend that she knew nothing of it. Amleth answered: "It is necessary to me either that a glorious death should put an end to my days, or having my weapons in my hand, laden with triumph and victory, I should snatch life from those who make mine unhappy. What is the use of a life in which shame and infamy are the executioners which torment our consciences?" He gave her a year to wait, until he should come of age, in which she might embroider the story of his life in arras, then celebrate his funeral. The King, uneasy at the disappearance of his Chamberlain, hurried Amleth off to the King of England to receive the tribute, along with two companions, who bore letters ordering Amleth's instant execution. In the night Amleth secured these letters,

substituted the names of his companions for his own, and suggested that the English King should give him his daughter in marriage. Now Amleth had been taught the arts of divination, and he told the English King certain secrets which caused trouble around, and great fear of Amleth.

Everything went as he had planned, and he returned to Denmark within a year, to find the courtiers carousing at his supposed funeral feast. He was single-handed among them all, so he went about to serve the company, and induced them to go on to a double measure in drinking, in honour of his return, until they were all quite intoxicated, and fell on the floor. Then he dragged down the arras over them, pegged it down with the skewers that he had sharpened for the purpose, and set the pavilion on fire, so that they were all burnt to death. He had noted that his uncle had slipped away from the feast before the end. He followed him, and found him in bed, with his sword lying by his side. Amleth took it up, and laid down in its place his own, which had been nailed into its scabbard by some one in the hall. He awaked his uncle, told him what he had done, and while Fengon was vainly trying to draw the sword out of the scabbard, Amleth struck him, and killed him with the very sword with which he had killed his brother.

Amleth then went out and addressed the mob which had gathered round the palace at the sight of the flames. He explained what he had done, and why. It was surely his duty to revenge the death of his father. He told them that now they had no one to look to but himself, and so they accepted him

as their King. This is the dramatic ending as it closes the third book of Saxo. Belleforest goes on to record the “other occurrences” as they appear in the fourth book, but as they have no relation whatever to the play, I do not here weight this paper with them.

Every one knows how *our* story of Hamlet runs. Why did Shakespeare (and with him I must combine the unknown author of the unknown early play, if any such there were) ignore the dramatic possibility of the story as given by Saxo and Belleforest, non-suit the title, and alter the whole character-scheme, situation and *denouement*? I do not know of any critic who has asked these questions, nor of any who, without asking, has answered them. But it is necessary to answer them before we understand Hamlet, or Shakespeare in ‘Hamlet.’

In his version of the story Belleforest occasionally moralises. He praises Amleth for his “ruse,” his courage, and his success. But he adds apologetically, “All these things happened long before the faith of Jesus Christ had been introduced into Denmark.” That sentence gives the clue to the cause of the difference. Christianity was the pivot on which the changes turned. The dramatist brought the Amleth of the story a thousand years adown the stream of time, to a period long *after the faith of Christ had been introduced into Denmark*, indeed, into times contemporary with his own. Yet, by a strange method of his own, he leaves the *history* at the old date, at a period when the Norse men made incursions into England and even occasionally levied tribute, the period when the Vi-

kings ruled the waves, and Norway and Denmark were sometimes united, and sometimes at war. It was as if, in geologic terms, there had been an upheaval and a crumpling of the strata, a subsidence of one part alone, and a *fault* in the series. After all, the mere chronology of *history* did not matter very much to Hamlet. But the whole attitude of Hamlet to life is *changed* by his change of faith, new characters are necessitated, new incidents and action for them and the plot has to be altered.

It would be well to imagine what Hamlet was, a little over four months before the play opens. He was the idol of his parents and of the populace. He had been trained in all the manly exercises of the time, in all the courtly graces; he could even write verses, and *manage* a theatrical company. He had been brought up in Roman Catholicism, but he had been sent to school at Wittenberg, the great Protestant University. There he had studied, beside the logic of the Schoolmen, the moral philosophy, rhetoric, and literature of the Classicists, the metaphysics of the Theologians. The eternal discussions and disputations of the Sophists were the University methods of sharpening his wits. He was young, just twenty, like his prototype in the story (bear that in mind against all the alterations made in the clown scene to thirty). Youths went to the Universities early in Shakespeare's days, generally about twelve. He had evidently spent a good many seasons at Wittenberg before he came home, leaving Horatio there. He had begun to study law and politics at court. Ophelia gives the best description of him in her soliloquy, in words which do not seem to have

been unpremeditated, but rather fragments from songs or sonnets, possibly composed by herself or some other admiring courtier for the table books of a select few :

“What a noble mind . . .
The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword,
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers.”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had been the playmates of his earlier youth and lighter hours, but it was the Horatio who had worked with him in Wittenberg whom he had chosen for his *alter ego*, his very friend. He says himself :

“Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal’d thee for herself . . . Give me that man
That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him
In my heart’s core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.”—(III, 2.)

Here Hamlet paints himself, as a man is known by his friends. His uncle adds a touch to the description :

“He being remiss,
Most generons, and free from all contriving
Will not peruse the foils.”

And again :

“He’s loved of the distracted multitude.”—(IV, 3.)

The dramatist endorses all these praises, and further gives him a sensitive heart, keen wit, manly courage, and metaphysical thoughtfulness beyond his years.

It is evident that there had been some special affection between Horvendille, here called the elder Hamlet, and his only son. He was probably being trained by his father in kingcraft as his assistant and successor. There was no cloud in all their sky. Then fell a bolt from the blue! His father was *found dead*, sleeping in the orchard, and it was said that he had been *stung by a serpent*. Overwhelmed by grief and amazement, young Hamlet took no note of passing events. His uncle retained naturally his own share in the government, and by some form of election by the people he seems to have slipped, gradually and unostentatiously, into that of his brother. He spared the weeping widow and mourning son all the trouble of arrangements, and neglected no jot or tittle of due observance in the funeral. He tried to comfort the widow, and did it with success; he tried to comfort young Hamlet, and only the more repelled him.

At this stage the drama opens. The Christianity shed upon Hamlet is suffused upon all around him. Ophelia has had no mother to look after her, but she obeys the prudent counsels of her father and of her brother. She reads saintly books, and does not tempt Hamlet sinfully, though she loves him honestly. Her father, Polonius, is clothed in a loose robe of conventional Christianity, and a similar one sits even more lightly on her brother, Laertes.

The Queen, being christianised, had to be made innocent of any share in the murder of her husband, of any infidelity towards him while he lived. Her haste in marrying again was only *indecorous*. It was a very common practice in Shakespeare's time,

as lawsuits respecting widows' dowers abundantly show; but the progress of civilisation had made that wrong which would not have been considered so in pagan times, the marrying of her deceased husband's brother. Hence arises Hamlet's intolerable sense of shame.

But it is the way in which Christianity has affected his uncle, which *necessitates the change to a new central action*. In the story, Fengon had killed Horvendille openly at a feast, before the court, probably in Hamlet's presence, certainly to his knowledge. But the fratricide of Christian times is perforce affected by the surrounding influence of a creed which he cannot assimilate. He could not *be* a Christian, but he felt it necessary *to pretend to be one*. He made a party only for friendly support, and with infinite cunning he tried to make the best of the situation. He killed his brother secretly, without requiring help from anyone, and *nobody knew* that *he* was related to the murderer as direct cause to the effect. To Hamlet should have come the duty of investigation and punishment had he known it to be murder; but his bewilderment and grief had made him let slip the opportunity; and how could he *revenge* himself upon a "serpent"? He knew nothing of the real circumstances, and nobody was able to tell him, except one who would not tell—the King himself.

How, then, was Hamlet to be given the key which should unlock the mystery? There was no ghost in the story of Hamlet; it was not needed then. "Killing" had been "no murder" to the pagan Fengon, and he was not ashamed. But the chris-

tianised conditions which produced shame and secrecy necessitated the finding of some means of giving the necessary information. No action could move, no plot could be developed, *until Hamlet knew*. The dramatist found his means of communication in the ghost. The supernatural was a popular avenue for providing information which could come by no other way. Doubtless, it was suggested to the poet in reading the story of Belleforest, when he came to the passage in which "Amleth" reproaches his mother for marrying again, "sans respecter *les ombres de mon père*," and "*les ombres*" became "the shades," and the shades became the ghost, who is, in reality, the moving spirit in the play.

The murderer, meanwhile in "the castle of security," had been ingratiating himself with every one. He had suggested that it was the best thing possible for the State, that he should wed Gertrude, their overlord's daughter, and be her stay and protector against her country's foes. And so said they all, and so she agreed. The wedding festivities took place soon, and lasted long. Hamlet could not feast. His beloved father was gone, never to return. Not for him was the speedy consolation of the King and Queen and Court, not for him the easy settlement of the great troubles which burdened his soul, as suggested in Belleforest. For the first time in his life he had been crushed by a great sorrow; had been faced by the awful realities of life and death. It was not only that the joy of his heart seemed dead, but the meaning of his life had become obscured. His uncle had taken possession

of his future: "Popped in between the election and my hopes." Awful suspicions had arisen when his mother had dried her tears, and fierce indignation had rooted itself in his soul when the suspicion became a certainty, and his mother shamed herself and him, as well as the shades of his father, by contracting a hasty and illegal marriage with his uncle.

I do not think that it has been fully realised that all Hamlet's distaste for life had developed before he knew of the murder. It was his mother's shame, even more than his father's loss, which made him loath it. He felt with Isabella, in 'Measure for Measure,' there was no fear in death:

"And shamed life a hateful."—(III, 1.)

He felt, further, pitifully alone. His former friends turned their faces to the rising sun. *How could they forget?* (Horatio, he thought, was at Wittenberg.) What was the use of his own broken life and frustrated desires? Why did he hate his uncle so? Was it only because he had taken his birthright from him? Or because he had spell-bound his mother? How had his father really died? He churned his griefs and shames and perplexities, his fears and desires, with aching throbs in the hollows of his heart. And his own life began to waste away.

Being a Christian youth, he is not made acquainted with the divination of his prototype. The dramatist is preparing him for the advent of the ghost. This is a very remarkable ghost. It was no subjective creation of an excited mind of the pattern of those

who appeared to Richard III or to Macbeth. It was a sturdy, objective ghost, who wanted witnesses as well as a listener. It did not appear to the criminal, but to the innocent. It did not appear first to those *who cared*, but to the indifferent; not to his forgetful wife nor his remembering son, but to the sentries who watched for the new King as they had watched for the old, and who were not thinking at the time of "the Majesty of buried Denmark." The two watchmen must have been discreet; they told no one but Horatio. He told them that long since the late King had slain Fortinbras, of Norway, and taken some of his inheritance, and that young Fortinbras was coming with his legions even then to ask reparation. When Horatio came with them the watch gained courage to stay and observe the resemblance to the late King. They bade *him* speak, because he was a scholar. The ghost appears, but will not speak.

"This bodes some strange eruption to our state. . . .
But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me.—Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me!"

It does not speak, and the cock crows.

"Let us impart what we have seen to-night,
Unto young Hamlet; for upon my life
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him."

Horatio and Hamlet would be sure to know all about apparitions. Reginald Scot, an Englishman, had written a book about them in 1584. And King James of Scotland knew even more. He had

published his book on ‘Demonologie’ in 1597, and classified the kinds of spirits which trouble people. “The second kind assume a dead body, wherein they lodge. They can easily open without dinne any door and enter thereat . . . to discover to them the will of the defunct, or what was the way of his slaughter.”

The next day the King and Queen tried to persuade Hamlet to leave off his mourning robes, which he refused to do while his heart mourned: “I have that within which passes shew.”

They begged him to stay at home and not return to Wittenberg, as he wished to do. He agreed to obey, and the King arranged for that night carousals to Hamlet’s health. Hamlet was then left to his well-known soliloquy. It was not only his intense grief at the loss of his father, which had burnt inwardly for lack of due expression, but there was the sudden check in the due course of his life, which hitherto had progressed in ordered sequence towards an understood end now frustrated; the scorn of those who changed so readily; the sharp awakening to his own relative unimportance, and yet the importance to himself of his honour. It was the galling sense of shame for a mother, who did not feel any for herself, which weighted him most heavily, and made him wish to slip out of a life where such things were. He recognised then that the Everlasting had fixed his canon against self-slaughter, and he submitted with a groan:

“ But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.”—(II, 1.)

Interrupting these humiliating thoughts, into the

deserted hall, entered, with the soldiers, Horatio, Hamlet's only friend. He was not very sure even of him just then. He had suffered so much. When he heard their news, "This troubles me," he said before the soldiers, but he let them go before he added :

"My father's spirit in arms ? All is not well,
I doubt some foul play."

The others had thought only of some possible danger to the State; he thought only of his father. That afternoon Laertes bade farewell to his father and sister; that evening the King "kept wassail" to Hamlet's health; that night Hamlet went out to meet the ghost, though it was "bitter cold." They were talking of drunkenness when the apparition came :

"Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
I will speak to thee . . . O, answer me ! . . .
Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements . . . What should we do?"

The ghost beckoned, the soldiers urged Hamlet not to go with it :

"I do not set my life at a pin's fee,
And for my soul, what can it do to that ? . . .
My fate cries out."

He goes alone to listen to the ghost. Evidently his father had never been sent to the school at Wittenberg, whither he had sent his son. There is not a trace of logic in his talk, nor a sign of attention to rhetorical or psychological effect. If he had

been a sensible ghost, he would have tried to make the best of his case. Horatio expected some valuable State secrets; Hamlet being only obsessed by the crime of his mother, when the ghost came, had a sudden intuition that *murder* was in the air, but the murder of the innocent man, received at once to Paradise. Had the ghost delivered his message simply and directly, the plot would have worked out normally. He says, "Mark me," to one who was doing nothing else. He makes clear that he brought with him no "airs from heaven," that his intent was *not* "charitable": that he had not come with any advice to save the country, that he never thought of the country. Indeed, he leaves it to be argued that he did not *come* to say anything; that he was *doomed* to walk the night, and took advantage of his opportunity to try to satisfy the last of his human vices, the thirst for *revenge*. By this the ghost of Christian times is linked to the old Paganism from which the Hamlet Saga had sprung. No wonder that Lodge scorned "The ghost which so miserably cries at the theator, 'Hamlet, revenge!'" With strange prolixity he dwells on what *he* is now suffering in Purgatory for his own "foul crimes," though he had been "forbidden to tell the secrets." He suggests that *he* had something to confess, and does not confess it, nor does he ask from his only son a Christian prayer for his suffering soul. It would have been more practical to have started at once "List, list, oh list!" though even then he left Hamlet a miserable moment with the fear that his mother might also have been stained with his blood. At last the truth came out clear:

"The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown."

"Oh my prophetic soul! my uncle!"

This, then, as a possibility, had been gnawing at Hamlet's heart all along, too indefinitely to be shaped until Horatio had told him that his father's ghost had come. Now, *he knows*. Though the ghost describes his love for Hamlet's mother as holy, he does not paint himself otherwise as an innocent victim. He was "Cut off in the blossoms of my sins." There is no clue given as to the nature of these sins, and we are left uncertain as to whether or not *he deserved to die*. With a renewed caution to Hamlet to deal tenderly with his mother, the ghost vanishes when he scents the morning air. The conversation must have indeed been long which lasted from the midnight hour till dawn, for it was evidently not midsummer then. "Adieu, remember me!"

Hamlet's excitement, sympathy, wrath, revenge, break out when left alone. Yes, he will remember,

"I'll wipe away all trivial fond records."

This is the preliminary to the pushing aside of Ophelia. He *will forget all else*—

"And thy commandment all alone shall live."

Thus, four months after his father's death, begins Hamlet's quest for *revenge*, and the Hamlet of the play became for a time the Amleth of the story, alone and unaided, determined to do what he thought his duty, cunning, secretive, patient, and remorse-

less. He did not even tell his friends what he had heard, further than that it was "an honest ghost." He had already, "with wings as swift as meditation," planned the preliminary step in his "ruse," and he made them swear that they would never speak of what they had seen, even if he chose "to put an antic disposition on," and the ghost echoed "Swear." Hamlet said "Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!" forgetful for the time that his father was going back "to sulphurous and tormenting flames," and that it was his father's own crimes which disturbed his rest. He let his followers think that he had been entrusted with some secret of State, for he cried—

"The time is out of joint, O! cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right."

His uncle's crime had put the time out of joint for him, and Hamlet's revenge alone would lead to his own succession, and give him power to put things right. He seems at once to have "put his antic disposition on." When Polonius, the spy by nature, was sending Reynaldo after his son to watch him in Paris, the frightened Ophelia rushed in. She had been the first to witness the change in Hamlet. He had made up his mind not to seek help from her, or trust her who owed obedience to such a father, and to such a King, even if she had been strong enough to wish to risk it. The King was making every effort to discover the cause of Hamlet's madness, if it were real, and if it were dangerous. He appoints Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to sound him. Polonius finds a possible and

safe cause in his thwarted love for Ophelia, and suggests watching him in her company. The King agrees, for he would fain believe this.

Then follows the episode of the players. The dramatist drags in a bit of personal and contemporary life (or did Richard Burbage do so, Hamlet's first expresser?) when he tells of the wrongs of the tragedians of the Globe, who had been flouted by a company of children at the Blackfriars, "little eyases that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for it." He speaks of the old play of 'Hecuba' and the 'Fall of Troy,' which had been translated in Thomas Newton's 'English Seneca,' 1581, but not in Shakespeare's words. These were drawn from no known rendering of the drama, and we must take them as his own. Moved by the power and pathos of the players to a great idea, Hamlet asks the chief player if they could play 'The Murder of Gonzago,' interpolating a short speech which he should write for them. He agrees. It may not at first be realised that the introduction of the players had also arisen from the christianising of Hamlet. The ghost had aroused feelings of revenge, the use of the players was an appeal to justice. In Hamlet's soliloquy we can read that he had been going over so often in critical thought his whole interview with his father's spirit, that he had begun to read new possible meanings into his words. At the best, its testimony would not be accepted in a court of justice as sufficient to exonerate him from blood-guiltiness should he kill his uncle on ghostly authority alone. It would not be fair to his

enemy. No one else knew. He must force him to become witness against himself. He had known such scenes awake slumbering consciences. He could not help reproaching himself for his doubts and his delay, for his coldness in the enterprise. The actor could put passion in his words, bring tears to his eyes, for Hecuba. "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?" He could not do this himself, but he would watch the King under the actor's spell.

"If he but blench
I know my course. The spirit I have seen
May be the devil* . . . yea and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy . . .
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King."—(II, 2.)

No one else suspected; the King is not afraid. It is not until the beginning of the third act, while he and Polonius are preparing to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia, that we get the first hint that the King feels his life "a heavy burden." Hamlet enters, unaware of the trap, and in his soliloquy completes the chain of thoughts started in his first soliloquy (Act I, Sc. 2). Then he had only *wished* for death to relieve him of a life he found distasteful. But he had not then heard what the ghost had to tell him. Now he makes a deliberate estimate of the values of life and death and of the consequences of forcibly ending life, in sleep.—(III, 1.)

* "Was it not some Demon in the likeness of a god who enjoined it, *i.e.* Orestes' revenge for his father's murder?" (Euripides, 'Electra,' 979).

"But in that sleep of death what dreams may come."

In his first meditation God's command was sufficient as a deterrent, now the terrors of the revelations of ghostly sufferings gathered round his soul. The consequences unnerved him. Whatever crimes his father had committed, *he* was innocent of the last and greatest crime of self-destruction. He could not face *that*. The plans and enterprises in the old Amleth story went on in ordered sequence. Amleth took up arms against his sea of troubles, to end *them*, not himself. But to the Christian Hamlet all things lag, being "sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought." He then realises that what had seemed to be a duty laid on him had become too heavy for him *because he thinks*. He had thought of his father's death, of the ghost's words, of his uncle's crimes, his mother's heartlessness and shame, the people's changefulness, his own dissatisfactions in life, his normal duty, his abnormal duty at the present time, and the possible future consequences of each step, till his agonised soul whirled in a maelstrom of thought. Unlike Macbeth, who could jump the life to come so that he might be sure of this, Hamlet was willing to jump this life so that he might be sure of the next. Suddenly, he notices the fair Ophelia, and thinking, as he had been, of responsibilities and punishment, he cried :

"Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered."

Her tactlessness, density, and blundering struggle between her filial obedience and her love makes the meeting but a scene of new friction. Hamlet says :

"I am very prond, revengeful, and ambitious
Believe none of us."

You have faults too, for you paint your life and your face. "Go to a nunnery, go!"—The shelter for disappointed lovers, the place of repentance for conscious sinners, the oubliette of undesired existences. Left alone, the artificial phrases in which she had painted Hamlet, soon gave way to real feeling,

"And I of ladies most deject and wretched
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh,
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth,
Blasted with ecstasy ; Oh woe is me !"

She believes in his madness, not so the listening King, and herein he differs from his prototype in the story, though his next step is the same. Hamlet must to England, "Madness in great ones must not unwatched go." Polonius evidently does not approve of this, and suggests that they should first try what his mother could do with him.

Before the play-scene, it is evident that Hamlet had confided in his one friend the full story of the ghost concerning his murder. Now he wants Horatio to help him to watch his uncle. He does not himself wish to be "passion's slave," nor reckon his enemy by his own jaundiced eyes. If the King shows no sign of guilt,

"It is a damned ghost that we have seen."

They separate in order to have different points of

view. Apparently the King's eyes had at first been wandering, probably watching Hamlet. He does not seem to have noticed the dumb show which sketched the plot. Hamlet thought that the first scene should have stung his mother's heart, but she answers calmly and unsuspiciously. But the King was already aroused. "Is there no offence in it?" "No, no, your Majesty, and we that have pure souls, it touches us not." Hamlet's "ruse" succeeded, so different from that of the story. The King rose, apparently ill. The Queen was anxious about him. Polonius calls for lights, the courtiers disperse, Hamlet and Horatio are left alone.

"O good Horatio,
I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds.
Didst perceive?" "Very well, my lord."

No one else had perceived anything peculiar in the play. They liked plenty of blood and murder in their tragedies then. But the "King liked not the comedy!" Rosencrantz and Guildenstern came to tell him of the King's anger, his mother's perturbation and desire to speak with him in her closet. Hamlet laid aside his mantle of madness to his old friends. He was reckless then, and *certain*. He had shown the Court that the mere story of a murder could excite the King to such an extent. He could use this as proof ere long, when his time came. What had he done to make an innocent man angry? Polonius came to tell him the same thing. Hamlet's mind was clear at last.

"'Tis now the very witching time of night
When churchyards yawn."

He could do work *now*—at least he thought he could—which he might not do by day. He believed that when he went to his mother's closet he would find the King with her, and that he would “end his troubles there and then.”

The King's anger had not dulled his wits. He had given his *orders*, and was left alone. His soul, startled into terror by the fear of a general discovery, now that he knew that Hamlet *knew*, acknowledged his sin :

“It hath the primal eldest curse upon it,
A brother's murder.”

He wanted to pray, but could not. He had not confessed, nor repented, nor made restitution. Still he would try; and in the semblance of prayer, trying to deceive his Creator as he had deceived his creatures, with words that should fly up, while thoughts remained below, Hamlet came on him. *This* is the *crisis* of the play. It is generally supposed that Hamlet's delay showed weakness of character. What could he do but delay? How could one weak hand defy a nation, or even a crowding group of watchful courtiers? The real *Amleth* delayed for a year; you can count Hamlet's delay in days. He had perforce to wait until the chance came to him to meet the King *alone*, as man to man. *Then Hamlet had his chance.* He had come to the hour when the Brazen Head would have said, “*Time is,*” and he did not recognise the voice; he forgot that “there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune”; he had his chance, as the Amleth of the story had,

when his foe was at a disadvantage. The real Amleth took it, and so the tragedy was triumphantly ended. But *the King prayed*. The knightly feeling lingered into the sixteenth century. A Christian knight could not take his enemy unawares. He did not know that the King's prayers were as false as his smiles. But it was for no knightly feeling that Hamlet stayed his hand. The poison of the ghost had entered into his soul; he wanted more than blood for blood; he wanted more than vengeance:

“Am I then *revenged*
To take him in the purging of his soul?”

He had convicted the King in his own conscience. Had he waited till the poor prayer was ended, solemnly challenged him as God's messenger of retribution, after confession and restitution, he would have sent him to God's mercy for absolution. The one sinner would have died, the courtiers would have been spared. Things would have been made clear to them, had Hamlet struck *then*, with the echo of “the murder of Gonzago” in their memory, and they would have turned to the Prince meekly as their rightful King. But he put up his sword, resolving to *choose his opportunity*, instead of taking that which was given him, and went on to his mother's closet to stain his own hands with blood, and make vengeance impossible. With the flush of triumphant discovery still on his cheek, he took masterful methods with his mother, who cried, “Help,” and from the arras came the echo “Help.” Here, he thought, he had his chance again, now

perfectly suiting his dramatic plan. Without looking, he plunged his sword through the drapery, thinking to kill a spying King. Hamlet had slain his man, his hands would never again be clean—"Blood would have blood." That which was excused in the Pagan Amleth fettered all future action in the Christian Hamlet.

His words to his mother fulfilled all his desire. He awakened her conscience, won her to his views. Then came the ghost, "to whet his almost blunted purpose" and to reawaken his tenderness for his mother. Was this the real objective ghost he had seen with Horatio? Or a subjective ghost evolved from his own inner consciousness? I am inclined to think it was the latter—that a concrete vision, born of memory, rose before his excited brain. It told him nothing now that he did not know. His mother saw nothing save Hamlet's countenance, she heard nothing save Hamlet's excited words. The vision past, Hamlet continued till he "cleft her heart in twain." She promised him that she would not go to the King that night. But as soon as Hamlet left, she rushed to her husband to tell him of the death of Polonius. It put him in dire perplexity. He dare not give Hamlet a public trial, for he knew that he would *speak*. He sent him at once to England. By some means or other he encountered the army of young Fortinbras, diverted by his uncle's ambassadors from acting against Denmark, and now only seeking to pass through, to fight the Polacks.

"The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
. . . For a fantasy and trick of fame,"

leads Hamlet to measure his delays, in such a duty as his. He has grasped the cause—

“ Some craven scruple
Of *thinking* too precisely on the event.”

. . . “ O from this time forth

My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth,”—(IV, 4.)

and he reverts to Amleth's method, in signing the death-warrant of his two friends. He was not slow to take the chance of a pirate ship and return home unexpectedly in a few *days*. Meanwhile had burst into the court the tempest of Laertes' wrath for the death of *his* father, and the neglect of the honours at burial. Doubtless the humiliating discovery that there was a cloud upon the circumstances of his death made Laertes the more ready to fall in with the fiendish purpose of the King, and even to suggest the poisoning of the pointed rapier. The Queen came to tell them that Ophelia, in her madness, was drowned. Why did Shakespeare drown her? Belleforest did not. I may note a strange coincidence. I found among the “Ancient Indictments” at the Record Office a roll of coroners' inquests for 1580–81. Among these is the case of *Katharine Hamlet*, who was found drowned in the Avon at Teddington, not far from Stratford. The question was, had she drowned herself? On evidence it was held that she had been going down to the river that she might fetch water, that she slipped in accidentally, met an innocent death, and might have Christian burial. Had the little incident floated through Shakespeare's brain

from his youth, till it was recalled by the name of “Hamlet”?

There is a great deal of blundering about *dates* in the grave-digging scene, which I cannot now discuss, but it lets us see that Hamlet had not been able to “wipe from his heart all trivial fond records” so easily as he thought he could for his “great quest.” Her murdered father came between him and the fair Ophelia, as he came between him and Laertes.

Hamlet had one good fortune, to have his conference with his only friend Horatio, to whom he disclosed his uncle’s treachery, “Is’t not perfect conscience to quit him with this arm?” To Horatio’s suggestion that the King would shortly hear from England :

“It will be short; *the interim is mine*:
And a man’s life’s no more than to say ‘one’:—
But I am very sorry good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself.”

He had reason to be sorry for himself as well as for Laertes, for even that *short interim* was *not his*, but was filled by Laertes, and *his revenge* for Hamlet’s rash and unregarding stroke. Hamlet is willing to give Laertes “satisfaction.” He is not afraid of fencing, he has been in practice. But, like all highly sensitive natures, whether from mortal thought-transference, or the intuition of genius, he had *presentiments*, “Thou wouldest not think how ill all’s here about my heart.” We watch breathlessly all the stages of the tragedy, exasperated only by the printer’s blunder, “He’s *fat*, and scant of breath.” The word *must* have

been contracted in some transcript to *fit*, whence the printer made "fat." Hamlet never could have been fat, "he thinks too much, such men are dangerous," but are never "fat." Generous to the end, he and Laertes forgive each other, and for his own *wrong* Hamlet stabs his uncle with the venomed point; for his *mother's death* he makes him finish the fatal cup; but for his *father's death* he had lost his revenge in his lost opportunity. Young Fortinbras draws near, to whom Hamlet left his voice, and he gave this noble prince a soldier's funeral. A memory of Shakespeare's previous play, and of Mark Antony, is awakened in the about-to-be oration of Horatio. For Horatio was the only one who knew the whole truth from beginning to end, the only one who dwelt in Hamlet's heart of hearts; and the Hamlet we know to-day is the Hamlet whose story Horatio told, over his friend's slaughtered corse. "The rest is silence."

ENGLISH RELIGIOUS POETRY.

BY THE VERY REV. WILLIAM RALPH INGE, D.D., F.R.S.L.,
Dean of St. Paul's.

[Read May 26th, 1915.]

THE average Englishman is as little likely to take the poets for his spiritual guides as to wish that a philosopher was his king. Poets and philosophers are idealists; and as a practical man, the average Englishman finds idealism out of place in so serious a business as saving his soul or governing the country. If he deigns to read the poets at all, they are the companions of his lightest or of his heaviest hours; he reads in bed after his morning tea, or devotes to the muses the dregs of a busy day. We are not, as Carlyle complains, like the "old Arabs," who "would sing and kindle bonfires and solemnly thank the gods that in their tribe too a poet had shown himself." However that may be, the old Greeks, whose manners and customs are more important to us than those of the old Arabs, used to sit at the feet of the poets, who were, as Aristophanes says, the schoolmasters of the full-grown. It is a pity that we do not treat our classics with the same seriousness. For the best of our English wisdom, and our clearest visions of truth, beauty, and goodness, are enshrined in our poetry. Our best poetry is generally serious, moral, didactic,

often definitely religious in its aim. Our poets have aspired with Milton to "justify the ways of God to men," or with Wordsworth have considered the object of poetry to be "general and operative truth." Of these aims the former might seem to identify poetry with theology, the latter with philosophy. Such an identification certainly could not be accepted; but a very bold man might maintain the thesis that poetry is the proper vehicle for both these sciences. Does not religion teach by preference in parables? Has not miracle been called faith's dearest child; and have not faith's profoundest intuitions been frequently wrapped up in poetical myths and symbols, which dogmatism heavily asseverates as flat historical recitals, and rationalism as ponderously rejects? Is religious truth even capable of being expressed in prose? Is there not more of Christianity in the *Te Deum* than in all the three creeds? Poetry, for those who can appreciate it, can interpret spiritual reality better than creed and dogma; its forms are less rigid and more transparent. "Some form of song or musical language," says Principal Shairp, "is the best possible adumbration of spiritual realities." And if we turn to philosophy, have not the greatest philosophers been more than half poets? We value Spinoza, not for his geometrical metaphysics, but for the flashes of vision in which the "intellectual love of God" made him a "God-drunken man." And Plato is for ever unintelligible until we read him as a prophet and prose-poet, and cease to hunt for a "system," made in Germany, in his writings. Even Kant, as that brilliant renegade Englishman,

Houston Chamberlain, has lately shown us, was by no means the model professor of philosophy, but a seer with a broad and sane outlook upon life, who held that "wisdom is the companion of simplicity," and that "we can only understand what we do ourselves." Kant, however, was no poet; for his confession, "I only see what I think," seems to have been literally true.

I am not forgetting that fine stanza of William Watson about the difference between prose and poetry :

"Forget not, brother singer, that though prose
Can never be too truthful, nor too wise,
Song is not Truth, nor Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes."

But perhaps truth is most truly seen when her lips no longer look pale, and wisdom most wisely known when her eyes are seen to shine.

In any case, an unusually large proportion of the best English poetry may be said to convey religious teaching and to be inspired by religious emotion. The proportion of French poetry of which this could be affirmed is very much smaller, of German poetry decidedly smaller. Religion I take to consist of faith, hope, and love, raised to that higher power in which they and their objects are felt *sub specie aeternitatis*. Religious poetry is verse which satisfies the conditions of poetry, and in which this source of inspiration is clearly traceable. It is not necessary that the language of theology should be used. All poetry which sees the divine in nature or man is, to that extent, religious. On the other hand, poetry which

deals with so-called religious subjects is not necessarily religious at all. The ‘Metamorphoses’ of Ovid is entirely devoted to the doings of the gods and goddesses who were the objects of worship in the state religion. But no more irreligious poem was ever written. It is enough to recall the picture of the father of gods and men deliberating over a new amorous intrigue :

“ Hoc certe furtum coniumx mea nesciet, inquit ;
Aut si rescierit, sunt O sunt iurgia tanti ! ”

Nor can we call such tepid moralising as that of Pope’s ‘Essay on Man’ religious. It is wholly on the level of the understanding; where it is nearest to religion it is furthest from poetry. Poetry, as poetry, has nothing to do with systems of ethics. And there are greater men than Ovid and Pope, who, though they have sometimes written finely about religion, are not religious poets. Goethe surpassed even Bacon as the creator of wise and illuminating aphorisms, and many of them deal with religion; but at bottom I believe he was thoroughly in earnest about two things only—science and art. In one of his best-known epigrams he says, not truly, that he who has science and art has also religion. Victor Hugo, who proposed to confront the Creator on the day of judgment with “pride in his port, defiance in his eye,” is still further from the religious attitude. Our own greatest, Shakespeare, was not, if I may venture to say it, a religious man. He understands religion, as he understands everything else, and can draw it; but I do not think that he feels it. These are mighty architectonic minds,

which impose the forms of the human spirit upon plastic material. But the religious poet must view life and nature in a humbler temper. He must have “a heart that watches and receives”; he must sit still and “hearken what the Lord God will say concerning him.” It is not quite enough that he should fulfil Bishop Westcott’s definition of a poet, “one who sees the infinite in things”; the infinite that he sees must be the Eternal whom man can worship. Not that religious poetry need be strictly theistic; there is a poetry of pantheism which is clearly religious. Some of Wordsworth’s noblest poetry, Emily Brontë’s dying ode, and some of George Meredith’s poems, belong to this type. But we must not open our doors wide enough to admit Swinburne’s “*Hertha*,” the carmagnole of religion.

The majority of *hymns* do not rise to the level of poetry, and therefore need not occupy us to-day. We must, however, remember, in judging hymns, that they are made to be sung by congregations, and therefore must be judged by a different standard from poetry which is meant to be read. There are some hymns, of which that beginning “There is a land of pure delight” is a good example, which have the value of real poetry when sung to an appropriate tune, though none could give them a high rank as lyrics. The famous hymn, “O God, our help in ages past,” is only a moderately good metrical version of a psalm, but when sung it is magnificent. But it would be possible to make out a fairly long list of good hymns which are also fine poems in themselves. Such are Bishop Ken’s morning and evening hymns; Cowper’s “*Hark, my*

soul, it is the Lord," and "Sometimes a light surprises the Christian while he sings"; Heber's "Brightest and best of the Sons of the Morning"; Newman's "Lead, kindly Light"; and Montgomery's "For ever with the Lord." "Nearer, my God, to Thee," though ridiculed by Matthew Arnold, has some genuine poetry in it.

The majority of hymns have, no doubt, earned the judgments passed by Fuller upon Sternhold and Hopkins: "Their piety was better than their poetry, and they have drunk more of Jordan than of Helicon." Yet even Sternhold and Hopkins, or one of them, have deviated into poetry on at least one occasion. It would be hard to find a nobler stanza than this from their version of the eighteenth Psalm.

"The Lord descended from above,
He bowed the heavens most high,
And underneath His feet He cast
The darkness of the sky.

On cherubs and on cherubims
Right royally he rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."

Akin to hymns, and to be judged by the same standard, are Christmas carols and other sacred folksongs. The famous "Lyke-wake Dirge"—

"This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and sleet and candle lighte,
And Christe receive thy soule,"

can never be forgotten when it has once been read.

The soul of the Middle Ages breathes from it no less than from the tremendous “*Dies irae dies illa.*” Some of the early carols are very sweet, like the fifteenth century song to the Virgin :

“ I sing of a maiden King of all kings He came all so still As dew in April He came all so still As dew in April Mother and maiden Well may such a lady	That is makeless, To her son she ches. Where his mother was That falleth on the grass. There his mother lay, That falleth on the spray. Was never none but she ; Goddes mother be.”
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Equally beautiful is the Pre-Reformation carol “*In dulci jubilo,*” with its alternations of Latin and English, of glory and humiliation ; but this, I fear, was made in Germany.

It is not of hymns or carols that I wish to speak in this paper. If our delimitation of religious poetry is accepted, many of our greatest writers must be included among religious poets ; and what is more, they have often made their highest flights when speaking as religious men. Milton alone is a compensation for not being able, in this connection, to quote Shakespeare. If we were set to the hard task of choosing the two most perfect pieces of poetry in the English language, I do not think we should be far wrong in selecting two passages of Milton—one, the exquisite ode beginning, “*Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven’s joy,*” and the other the nobly pathetic lines, “*Hail, heavenly light, offspring of heaven first-born,*” ending with “*things invisible to mortal sight.*” Only just

below these sublime peaks is the youthful Nativity Ode, in which the “God-gifted organ voice of England” has brought more sonorous melodies out of the English language than any later poet has been able to elicit. Spenser’s “Heavenly Love” and “Heavenly Beauty” make Plato’s philosophy “musical as Apollo’s lute.” Wordsworth is confessedly at his best when his reverence for nature passes into contemplation of the Divine in nature. Among the group of great poets just below these giants, the religious sense is, in most of them, strongly developed. In this they are true representatives of their countrymen. The English genius is not vulgarly “practical”—that development is a mere episode connected with the exploitation of our coal and iron fields, our geographical position, and our other natural “advantages.” Far more truly our own is a grave and serious idealism, not lucidly philosophical nor daring in speculation, but reverent, dignified, and manly, with both feet planted on solid earth, but with eyes straining to pierce through the mist which shrouds a world of soft, mysterious, half-veiled beauty, a world of greys, greens, and browns, like our English landscape, with no fierce southern lights, hard outlines, and brilliant colours.

I do not propose in this paper to give you a roll of honour with snippets of criticism about each name. There are several books about English literature, written by eminent critics, in which our religious poetry is competently dealt with. I do not think that I could contribute anything valuable in purely literary criticism. I wish instead to consider our religious poetry under what is a comparatively

fresh aspect, by comparing the work of poets who were influenced by different types of religious belief.

There are names which refuse this kind of classification. The greatest name of all, Milton, cannot reasonably be placed in a catalogue of "Protestant poets." One critic, I know, has said that "Puritanism produced our greatest poet, next to Shakespeare"; to which another has rejoined that Puritanism spoilt him. I do not think that Puritanism either made or spoilt Milton. He is too great to be used in partisan controversy. "His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." Perhaps his was not a very amiable or sympathetic character—the same has been said about Wordsworth—but the intellectual vision for which he prayed, as a compensation for his loss of sight, was not denied him. Our "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies" remains the glory of the whole English race, without distinction of creed.

Catholic poetry was thoroughly English till the Reformation. Since that great revolution it has tended to be a thing apart, and has not exhibited the national characteristics in their integrity. The religious poetry of the Renaissance was joyous and picturesque, in sympathy with the genial festivals of the undivided Church, and now quite legitimately reminiscent of the ancient civilisation which bequeathed Catholicism to the world as the last of its creative achievements. The poem of William Dunbar, on the Nativity, is a good example, and I will quote the last two stanzas:

“ Now spring up flouris fra the rute,
 Revert you upward natnrally,
 In honour of the blessed frute
 That raiss up fro the rose Mary ;
 Lay out your leivis lustily,
 Fro deid take life now at the lest
 In worship of that Prince worthy
Qui nobis puer natus est.

“ Sing, heaven imperial, most of height !
 Regions of air make harmony !
 All fish in flud and fowl of flight
 Be mirthful and make melody !
 All *Gloria in excelsis* cry !
 Heaven, earth, sea, man, bird and beast—
 He that is crowned above the sky
Pro nobis puer natus est !”

After the Reformation all religious poetry becomes more didactic, personal, introspective, and meditative; this applies to Catholic as well as to Protestant poets. The seventeenth century is enriched by Crashaw, a convert to Catholicism, who died in the service of the Holy House at Loretto in 1650. Crashaw is one of the most uneven of our poets, but if we take him at his best, as every poet has a right to be taken, he must be given a high rank. His lines on St. Teresa are all on fire with the inspiration of fervent devotion.

“ Live here, great heart, and love and die and kill,
 And bleed, and wound, and yield, and conquer still.
 Let this immortal life, where'er it comes,
 Walk in a crowd of loves and martyrdoms.
 Let mystic deaths wait on it, and wise souls be
 The love-slain witnesses of this life of thee.

O sweet incendiary ! show here thine art
Upon this carease of a hard, cold heart ;
Let all thy scattered shafts of light, that play
Among the leaves of thy large books of day,
Combined against this breast at once break in,
And take away from me myself and sin ;
This glorious robbery shall thy bounty be,
And my best fortunes such fair spoils of me.
O thou undaunted daughter of desires !
By all thy dower of lights and fires,
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove,
By all thy lives and deaths of love,
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they ;
By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire,
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul and sealed thee his ;
By all the heavens thou hast in him,
Fair sister of the seraphim !
By all of him we have in thee,
Leave nothing of myself in me :
Let me so read thy life that I
Unto all life of mine may die."

Pope's remarks on Crashaw are one of the curiosities of criticism. "I take this poet to have writ like a gentleman ; that is, at leisure hours, and more to keep out of idleness than to establish a reputation ; so that nothing regular or just can be expected of him. All that regards design, form, fable (which is the soul of poetry), all that concerns exactness, or consent of parts (which is the body), will probably be wanting ; only pretty conceptions, fine metaphors, glittering expressions, and something of a neat cast of verse (which are properly

the dress, gems, or loose ornaments of poetry), may be found in these verses.” This of the author of the burning lines which I have just quoted; and of such gems as the following “Epitaph on a Young Married Couple, dead and buried together”:

“To these, whom Death again did wed,
This grave’s their second marriage-bed ;
For though the hand of Fate could force
Twixt soul and body a divorcee,
It could not sunder man and wife,
'Cause they both livéd but one life.
Peace, good reader, do not weep.
Peace, the lovers are asleep.
They, sweet turtles, folded lie
In the last knot that love could tie.
And though they lie as they were dead,
Their pillow stone, their sheets of lead
(Pillow hard, and sheets not warm) ;
Love made the bed ; they’ll take no harm ;
Let them sleep, let them sleep on,
Till this stormy night be gone ;
And the eternal morrow dawn ;
Then the curtains will be drawn,
And they wake into a light,
Whose day shall never sleep in night.”

English Catholicism in the nineteenth century produced two notable writers of religious verse, John Henry Newman and Coventry Patmore. The latter, a graceful and gentle singer of domestic affection and devout sentiment, has, I think, been overpraised as a poet by his co-religionists. Of Newman’s poetry it is difficult to speak worthily. The limpid, unemphatic beauty of his prose style does not desert him in verse, and it is well suited to

the dignity of an ecclesiasticism which has a great tradition behind it. But the extreme narrowness of his sympathies, and his intense mediaevalism, are rather chilling. He cannot own the spell of Pagan antiquity, even while on a visit to Italy, without the same qualms of conscience which make Jerome fear, quite unnecessarily, that he was becoming a Ciceronian.

“ Why, wedded to the Lord, still yearns my heart
Towards these scenes of ancient heathen fame ?
Yet legend hoar, and voice of bard that came
Fixing my restless youth with its sweet art,
And shades of power, and those who bore a part
In the mad deeds that set the world in flame,
So fret my memory here—ah ! is it blame,
That from my eyes the tear is fain to start ?
Nay, from no fount impure these drops arise ;
’Tis but that sympathy with Adam’s race
Which in each brother’s history reads its own :
So let the cliffs and seas of this fair place
Be named man’s tomb and splendid record-stone,
High hope, pride-stained, the course without the prize.”

And when he informs a would-be zealot for the Church that he must “ first learn how to hate,” we feel, in spite of this earnestness, the essential hollowness of the romanticist revival, which, if it were accepted with full seriousness, would drag us back into a world which few of us could contemplate without a shudder, a strange inhuman world, the first sight of which led a cultivated Pagan in the fourth century to predict that “a hideous and formless darkness was about to blot out all the beauty of the world.” Newman, whose historical

essays prove him to have been strangely lacking in the historical sense, could transport himself into the mediaeval atmosphere without realising either the barbarism which was the other side of mediaeval piety, or the grotesque incongruity of introducing such modes of thought into the life of the nineteenth century. It is the poetry of a highly cultivated but fatally isolated *enclave*, banked up by old loyalties and prejudices against the fertilising flood of living ideas.

The twentieth century has welcomed another Catholic poet, whose short life hardly allowed his powers to reach maturity—Francis Thompson. At the risk of offending some of his admirers, I must state my opinion that no writer of our time has been so extravagantly over-estimated. I do not deny that some of his poems show traces of poetic inspiration. But he is bloodless, sexless, and sometimes mawkish. An unpleasant odour of stale incense pervades all his work. His favourite epithet is “sacerdotal.” Even the sun is “sacerdotal.” In autumn “all nature sacerdotal seems.” We recall with grim pleasure Mr. A. C. Benson’s humorous comparison of a toad waddling along a garden path to a fat priest in a yellow cope, avoiding that proud knight in armour, the stag-beetle.

Why is it that a type of religion so rich in colour, so luxuriant in fancy, so conscious of a hundred links with a splendid past, should be incapable, in modern times, of producing any poetry of a very high order? If I am not mistaken, the Catholic poetry of the Continent, even in countries where Catholicism exercises an almost unchallenged sway over the

religious life of the people, is seldom of high merit. The reason may perhaps be found in that which is the strength of Catholicism—its clear, hard outlines, the precision of its dogmas, and the rigidity of its dialectic. A system which we can *see round* is not good for poetry. Pegasus is harnessed to a heavy waggon-load of ecclesiastical properties. A poet who should cut the reins and fly free would probably fall into heresy, or at least the suspicion of it. And so the very loyalty and enthusiasm for his church, which is the inspiration of the Catholic poet, limit and cramp him; and when beauty and truth from other sources attract him, he shrinks back, as we have seen, as if in fear of contamination.

The Anglican Church can show, on the whole, a far richer crop of poetry. From the Reformation to the beginning of the Oxford Movement it was a really national church, reflecting the religion of the English people in its strength and in its limitations. The literature of the Church of England has been scholarly, sane, and yet fervent. I ought, of course, to begin with my illustrious predecessor in the Deanery of St. Paul's, John Donne. But it is not easy to speak of him as a religious poet. His importance in the history of our literature lies in his bold rebellion against Elizabethan standards. He was the pioneer of new fashions in poetry. I cannot read his religious poems with much pleasure. They do not always ring true, and there is a trace of real morbidity in his imagination. There are other English poets about whom I feel the same hesitation. It was not uncommon for writers of

secular poetry to supplement their lighter effusions by pious songs ; and they were not least inclined to do this when their earlier poetry, like that of Donne himself, had been rather unedifying. Herrick composed his ‘Noble Numbers’ as an expiation for his “ unbaptised rhymes, writ in my wild unhallored times.” Habington, Wither, Marvell, and Cowley are all in the same case. Sidney, however, in his noble sonnet, at the end of which he wrote *Splendidis longum raledico nugis*, gives us an overpowering impression of sincerity, as does Spenser when he wrote :

“ Many lewd lays, ah woe is me the more,” etc.

But it is a result of that characteristic which Continental critics too unkindly call our hypocrisy, that several of our poets who have written tolerably well on religious topics are not religious poets. These, therefore, I pass over.

With George Herbert we come to a typically Anglican poet, one of the glories of the Church of England. He might have been a greater poet if he had not had Donne to imitate, but this influence affects only the form of his writing. Herbert is no doubt an ecclesiastic to the finger-tips. As Coleridge says, “the reader of Herbert, if he is to appreciate him thoroughly, must be an affectionate and dutiful child of the Church, and from habit, conviction, or a constitutional predisposition to ceremoniousness in piety as in manner, find her forms and ordinances aids to religion, not sources of formality.” Baxter, however, who was not constitutionally disposed to ceremoniousness in piety, and William Cowper were

great admirers of Herbert.* Cowper lived in an age when men were almost ashamed of praising such unclassical models as Herbert ; yet he says of him : “At length I met with Herbert’s poems, and, Gothic and uncouth as they were, I yet found in them a strain of piety which I could not but admire. This was the only author I had any delight in reading. I pored over him all day long, and though I found not here what I might have found—a cure for my malady—yet it never seemed so much alleviated as while I was reading him.” Coleridge adds that Herbert is “an exquisite master of this [what he calls the ‘neutral’] style, when the scholar and the poet supplies the material, but the perfect, well-bred gentleman the expressions and arrangement.” There is, in truth, something of the courtier in Herbert, with all his gentle piety and humble acceptance of the *fullentis semita ritur*. His unworldliness was of that noble sort which is based on knowledge of the world ; not of that unattractive sort which is based on ignorance of the world. He still belongs to the class on whose manners he had turned his back. His piety is not a professional saintliness ; he knows and admits things which the complete cleric refuses to recognise, as, for instance, that

“A little glory, mixed with humbleness,
Cures both a fever and lethargicness.”

In this he is, like all the best Anglican clergymen,

* Baxter says : “I must confess, after all, that next the Scripture Poems there are none so savoury to me as Mr. George Herbert’s. Herbert speaks of God like a man that really believeth in God, and whose business in the world is most with God ; heart-work and heaven-work make up his book.”

the layman's friend and counsellor. Shorthouse is not far wrong when he says that men like Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar are "the true founders of the Church of England." Refinement, good taste, culture, and reserve, with a deep foundation of devout feeling and pure living, are the qualities which we recognise, not without pride, as belonging to this type. The *via media* was then accepted from sheer conviction :

"A fine aspect in fit array,
Neither too mean nor yet too gay."

It is an ideal which might be commonplace and colourless in some cases, and so no doubt it often was. But Herbert's poems, which tell the story of his inner life, are the record of a genuine *quest*. The note of personal confession and experience gives his gentle muse a more individual and therefore a more universal power of appeal. It is a living and growing soul which he reveals to us.

Herbert's younger contemporary, Vaughan, after long neglect has been somewhat over-praised. He is often flat, as Herbert never is, and only in a few short passages equals, and now and then surpasses his master. But as a spiritual interpreter of nature he is above Herbert, who was too introspective to draw much inspiration from the external world. Vaughan's best message is that the fair English country may teach us to know our Creator.

"Fresh fields and woods! the earth's fair face,
God's foot-stool and man's dwelling place,
I ask not why the first believer
Did love to be a country liver?"

He is particularly good when he sings of the dawn, of running water, and of the effects of light. And he has some very felicitous images, like :

“That they, while Thou on both their spoils dost tread,
May crown thy feet, that could not crown thy head ;

an independent parallel to the beautiful lines of Propertius :

“Sic, caput in magnis ubi non est tangere signis
Ponitur hic imos ante corona pedes”;

and in the better-known figure of eternity as “a great ring of pure and endless light.”

Another Welshman, belonging to the same school as Herbert and Henry Vaughan, is Thomas Traherne, who may be said to have been recently discovered. Like Vaughan, he is a Wordsworthian before Wordsworth. Perhaps his favourite theme is that of Wordsworth’s “Ode on the Intimations of Immortality,” which he expounds in the beautiful poem beginning “News from a foreign country came,” and in the lines :

“No darkness then did overshad,
But all within was pure and bright :
No guilt did crush, nor fear invade,
But all my soul was full of light.
A joyful sense and purity
Is all I can remember,
The very night to me was bright,
’Twas summer in December.”

He gives us his creed in prose as follows : “The riches of invention have made us blind to the riches of nature. The riches of nature are our souls and

bodies, with all their faculties, senses, and endowments ; and it had been the easiest thing in the whole world to teach me that all felicity consisted in the enjoyment of all the world, that it was prepared for me before I was born, and that nothing was more divine and beautiful."

The eighteenth century, though not so barren in the poetry of religion as is sometimes supposed, has little to add to our gallery of Anglican singers. But the first half of the nineteenth produced one who, with Herbert, is the special glory of the Church of England, another country parson, John Keble. His immense popularity for more than half a century among the class of readers to which he himself belonged is a proof how admirably he represented the Anglicanism of the Victorian age. Like other Victorians, he is now in danger of being unduly neglected, and some of our critics do not take him seriously as a poet. This is, I think, a mistake. His gentle, meditative verse does not appeal to eager spirits ; perhaps, to speak the truth, it always appealed much more to women than to men, though certainly not to "the new woman" ; but its atmosphere is that of a country parsonage garden on a fine May afternoon, and there are many worse places in which to spend a few hours. There is perhaps not much in Keble that cannot be found expressed with greater force by Wordsworth ; but Keble will always live as the chief representative in poetry of a phase of religious thought and practice which beautified many lives and satisfied many pious and gentle hearts.

Another country parson who was a real poet is

Charles Tennyson, rector of Grasby in the Wolds, whose fame has been quite eclipsed by that of his illustrious brother. The following sonnet seems to me admirable for its simple directness of expression and purity of feeling :

“O God, impart thy blessing to my eries,
Tho’ I trust deeply, yet I daily err ;
The waters of my heart are oft astir—
The Angel’s there ! and yet I cannot rise !
I wish that Christ were here among us still,
Proffering his bosom to his servant’s brow ;
But oh ! that holy voice comes o’er us now
Like twilight echoes from a distant hill :
We long for his pure looks and words sublime ;
His lowly-lofty innocence and grace ;
The talk sweet-toned, and blessing all the time ;
The mountain sermon and the routhful gaze ;
The cheerly credence gathered from his face ;
His voice in village-groups at eve or prime.”

The last name to be included in this remarkable list is that of William Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet, whose whole life was spent in the beautiful rural county which is the scene of his poetry. He was for many years rector of Winterbourne Carne, near Dorchester, where he led the life of a model country clergyman, beloved by his parishioners. He wrote in dialect, and this has interfered with his popularity ; but his lyrics are, as Mr. Palgrave has said, “among the most varied in subject, the most perfect in form, the purest and sweetest in tone, which our literature contains. Humour and pathos, character and landscape, within the limits of the local sphere which he scarcely quits, each is at his command ; of

all modern poets he is the most truly and delightfully idyllic."

It is, indeed, a remarkable list—this of the poet-parsons of the Anglican Church. It might have been lengthened by including the names of Crabbe, Milman, and Trench, who have been omitted because Crabbe is hardly a religious poet, while the other two were not parish priests. What I wish to suggest is that the life of the country rectory, with all its intellectual limitations, is favourable to the development of poetic talent. A married clergy, drawn from the best educated section of the upper and upper-middle classes, and scattered over the villages of England, is a peculiarly English institution. Its days are, perhaps, numbered, but, on the whole, it has deserved the generous praise which Lecky bestowed upon it in a well-known passage. There are few places where the ideal of plain living and high thinking, kept in close touch with the prosaic realities of humble life by professional duty, has been more nearly realised than in scores of country parsonages since the Reformation.

Of all religious philosophies Stoicism, and Calvinism, which is simply baptised Stoicism, is the most antipathetic to poetry. Cowper, whom not nature but melancholia turned into a Calvinist, was driven by despair to write the horrible stanzas beginning :

“ Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portion,
Scarcely enduring stay of execution,
Wait in impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment.”

And I do not find the verses of Isaac Watts, in the same metre, much more to my taste.

“Hark, the shrill outeries of the guilty wretches !
Lively bright horror and amazing anguish
Stare through their eyelids, while the living worm lies
Gnawing within them.

“Thoughts, like old vultures, prey upon their heart-strings,
And the smart twinges, when the eye beholds the
Lofty Judge frowning, and a flood of vengeance
Rolling afore him.

“Hopeless immortals ! how they scream and shiver,
While devils push them to the pit wide-yawning,
Hideous and gloomy, to receive them headlong
Down to the centre !

“Stop here, my fancy ; (all away, ye horrid
Doleful ideas !) come, arise to Jesus,
How he sits God-like ! and the saints around him
Throned, yet adoring.

“O may I sit there when He comes triumphant,
Dooming the nations ! then ascend to glory,
While our Hosannas all along the passage
Shout the Redeemer.”

A very different account must be given of the influence of Platonism upon English religious poetry. What Platonism is, as a spirit in poetry, cannot be explained better than in the words of Prof. J. A. Stewart, of Oxford : “Platonism is the mood of one who has a curious eye for the endless variety of this visible and temporal world, and a fine sense of its beauties, yet is haunted by the presence of an invisible and eternal world behind, or, when the mood is most pressing, within the visible and

temporal world, and sustaining both it and himself — a world not perceived as external to himself, but inwardly lived by him, as that with which at moments of ecstasy, even habitually, he is become one.”* This is a description of Nature-mysticism rather than of Platonism; but Platonism is only the philosophy which is implicit in Nature-mysticism. The Platonist fills in the outline by teaching that the soul, in experiencing this vision of the divine and eternal in Nature, is remembering her true home, from which she descended into the world of change; that it is love of home which draws her upwards and gives her wings to escape from this muddy vesture of decay and ascend in heart and mind to the region where are the eternal archetypes of all that is good and fair and true here below; that there is the soul of the world which is the medium of communication between the individual soul and the realm of pure spirit; and that above the realm of pure spirit there dwells the ineffable Godhead, into whose mysterious presence the “spirit in love” is at rare intervals permitted to penetrate while in a state of trance. Plato himself was many other things beside a prophet of spiritual religion, but it was as a prophet and seer that his influence affected the whole future of philosophical and religious thought. Even in the dark ages, that river did not flow altogether underground, and in Dante it already fertilises once more those fields of Italy, where the Renaissance was first to spring into flower and fruit. And all through it is a

* ‘English Literature and the Classics,’ p. 26.

genuine faith, a living interpretation of life, by which men have guided their conduct and moulded their thoughts. It is distinguished from other moods, or other philosophies, by its deep love of this good and beautiful world, combined with a steady rejection of that same world whenever it threatens to conceal instead of revealing the unseen and eternal world behind. The Platonist loves Time, because it is the moving image of Eternity; he loves Nature, because in Nature he beholds Spirit creating after its own likeness. Those who classify Platonism as a dualistic philosophy are fundamentally mistaken. As soon as the seen and unseen worlds fall apart and lose connection with each other, both are dead. Such a severance at once cuts the nerve which makes the Platonist a poet. So long as the angels of thought can pass freely up and down the ladder which leads from earth to heaven, poetry of the highest kind is implicit in Platonism, whether it finds utterance or not; but so soon as God is banished from earth, and the beauty of form and colour from heaven, both are surrendered to the formless infinite which for Plato is the abode of the evil principle. For this reason, Wordsworth is a truer Platonist than Coleridge or Shelley. During the twenty years or so in which he was really inspired, the earth and every common sight seemed to him appareled in celestial light, and he was able to translate something of the splendid vision into words which enable his readers to see it too. Coleridge's mind was, as Wordsworth said of him, "debarred from Nature's living images" by the predominance in it of romantic fancies, and his tendency to "dream dreams" instead of "seeing

visions.” The same is true of Shelley; his Platonism is based, partly at least, on his acceptance of the philosophy of Plato and Plotinus, while Wordsworth’s was inborn and untaught. We may compare Shelley’s fine stanza :

“The One remains, etc.,”

with Wordsworth’s self-revelations in the ‘Prelude,’ or the ‘Lines composed above Tintern Abbey,’ about

“The sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
And rolls through all things”;

and we shall then realise how much more intimately felt is Wordsworth’s vision of the divine in and behind Nature.

Wordsworth is the greatest of our religious poets—not in his later days, as a Tory and a Churchman, but in his grand period, from 1798 to 1820. At that time he really saw and felt what he afterwards remembered and tried to revive—the presence of the living soul of the world :

“The great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.”

“Spirit knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the soul of all the world.”

This is not “natural” but spiritual religion.

The poet had to struggle to win it, for in this quest there is no illumination without self-purification by discipline; but his reward was such serene happiness as that of the land of Beulah in Bunyan's allegory, which was "beyond the valley of the shadow of death, and out of reach of Giant Despair."

Such, too, was the happiness of Henry More, a Platonist whose mind was not very unlike Wordsworth's. Of him it was said that "he enjoyed his Maker in all the parts of the universe, and saw the marks both of his counsel and benignity in all. Nay, he was transported with wonder as well as pleasure even in the contemplation of those things that are here below. He hath been heard to say, 'A good man could be sometimes ready, in his own private reflections, to kiss the very stones of the street.'"

I have left myself no time for the mystics, Quarles, whom I do not value very greatly, and Blake, whom I dare not try to appraise in a single sentence. Christina Rossetti deserves a place beside Herbert and Keble. In some notes of tender pathos she is quite unsurpassed.

Nor can I speak of our newer guides, Browning and Meredith, though they, too, are religious poets and teachers. The field is far too wide to be covered in one paper. I hope I have brought enough evidence to show that in this as in other ways English poetry is representative of English character and genius. With all our faults, we have never forgotten God, and we have sought Him where He is most surely to be found—in the life of nature and in the mind of man.

ANCIENT SEA GALLEYS, WITH REMARKS
ON THE METHOD OF PROPULSION
OF THE GREEK TRIREME.

BY PHILIP H. NEWMAN, F.R.S.L., F.S.A.

[Read March 24th, 1915.]

AMONG the problems left for our solution by the ancient world few have exceeded in difficulty or surpassed in interest the question of the propulsion of ships. We know that sails were used as well as oars, but while sailing was practised on the northern coasts of the Mediterranean, and even there not wholly relied upon, the use of oars was a constant necessity as a method of propulsion in the southern areas of that sea, where traffic would have been delayed by frequent calms. Rowing in some form seems to have been adopted from the time of the earliest navigators—Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek—and by the Greeks brought to a point of excellence very difficult for us to realise, for we are told of instances of voyages performed by triremes at nearly the speed of steamships. Monoremes, biremes, triremes, quatriremes, quinquiremes, and so on, up to the enormous vessel built for Ptolemy Philopater, sufficiently indicate size and manning, when it is kept in view that the rowers were placed in rows or banks on both sides of the ship, one row

to a monoreme, two to a bireme, three to a trireme, and so on, until we read of, in the monstrous ship of Philopater just mentioned, forty banks of oarsmen.*

The ships of the Greeks in early times were undoubtedly monoremes, and probably not unlike many mediaeval vessels. Homer speaks of the ships that conveyed the Greeks to Troy, undecked vessels excepting the fore and after parts. The rowing of such ships as these presented little difficulty in moderately fair weather. They were slight in structure, their constitution rarely equalling the heroic names they frequently bore (see list of the ships in the ‘*Iliad*’). They were never fitted for winter voyages, and rarely attempted them, this even applying to the biremes and larger vessels of the Roman period. That they were slight in construction we have no difficulty in deducing from Greek and Roman history, which records instances where necessity compelled the building of fleets in incredibly short spaces of time, as indicated both by Livy and Caesar. These were vessels for fair weather soldiers and sailors, and we are not surprised to hear that from November 11th to March 10th the seas were considered dangerous, or that fighting was rarely attempted in bad weather.†

But we have to consider now not the Roman period, but some four or five centuries before Christ, when Athens was the great naval power of the

* 4000 rowers (*Athenaeus*, v. p. 204).

† We have occasion for surprise, however, when we reflect that these hastily built vessels, long in proportion to their breadth, had not only to bear the strains of the sea, but that of frequently being drawn up on the shore.

world, when command of the sea assuring peace, trade and tribute, she had arisen among the rival states to affluence, art and culture, art enabling her to rear the splendours of the Acropolis, culture that ordinated the highest civilisation then extant. Like ourselves the Athenians were dependent for all their power and influence primarily on their marine. "I shall find no one to contradict me," said Demosthenes, "in declaring that the prosperity past and present of Athens, or its misfortunes, have arisen from the possession or absence of its triremes." What was a trireme? This is the question before us to-day, as it has been the question of the savants and the students, the sailors and the mechanicians, one may even say of the Cabinets, as well as the dockyards of modern Europe. The learned of England, France and Germany have consulted the classical authorities since the fifteenth century only to find that where the scholiasts have even made clearer the texts of Thucydides, Plato, Aristophanes and others who saw these ships, the ships were, when referred to by these witnesses, too familiar to occupy their attention. What need to dwell upon points of construction or means of propulsion, as much the common property of the world then as a bicycle or a motor-bus to ourselves to-day? Moreover, the scholiasts' translators and lexicographers were clerks, not practical mechanicians, and although not intentionally confusing they failed to describe comprehensibly that which they would often fail to comprehend. It is easy to understand that these writers and historians lent themselves more readily, as has been well said, to the human side of their subject, the *devoir*, the

élan, the bravery and *morale* of seamen and soldiers than to questions of arrangement of rowers or the length of their oars and methods of rowing.

The commonplace then, has become the problem of a later time. Those who have attempted solution are of three kinds : some peering into the dim vista of the past look for a sign in the hidden meaning of a text, some try to reconcile the texts as they stand with mechanical possibilities not understood, while others of a school of practical mechanicians will pooh-pooh both texts and interpreters and boldly asseverate—texts and monuments to the contrary—that that which they fail to interpret could not be.

Each of these have contributed chaos to a difficult question, and it would be the extreme of presumption for the writer of a brief paper such as this to pretend to offer the last word—I have no such idea, but at the same time it may be deemed permissible, and even fit and proper, to point out and show, if I am able, certain elements in the question, which, if observed at all, have not, in my opinion, been sufficiently noted and weighed. I should say here that this is the third paper read before this Society in which this subject has been treated. The first, to my knowledge, was written by Mr. W. S. Lindsay and entitled “On Ancient Galleys and their mode of Propulsion,” a learned and searching attempt to unravel the mystery from recognised authorities, showing the conflict of classical evidence with theory and with mechanical or maritime necessities. This was read before the Society February 15th, 1871, the late Sir Patrick Colquhoun,

Vice-President, in the chair. I may mention that I was present at the time, and hazarded some remarks of practical suggestion in the discussion following the reading. In Mr. Lindsay's paper one cannot help being struck by the apparent difficulty there has been in many minds in dissociating one period from another—a galley is a galley whatever its period, and the argument proceeds that it must of necessity follow that it being a galley it must be propelled like another galley—*autre temps autre moeurs* seems to be entirely forgotten. Equally is it forgotten that early man began to paddle before he commenced to row, also the importance of the pace and continuity of the paddling of the long narrow canoe of many savage island people. It occurred to me, after the reading of Mr. Lindsay's paper, how some of these thoughts and arguments might apply—arguments which I was to use on an occasion that did not, however, occur till long afterwards. It seemed to be possible that there might be many practicable transitions between the method of propulsion of the savage in his canoe and the rowing of a Leander crew, or even of a Spanish or Venetian galley.

Many years later, March 28th, 1900, a paper was read before the Society by Mr. Alfred Marks, on "Nero's Great Canal," with some remarks on Roman War Galleys, of which more anon. Both these papers, excellent and researchful as they were, arrived at no definite solution of the method of propulsion of the trireme, and contributed, it is to be feared, only to that long list of efforts, which Mr. Cecil Torr characterises as "more voluminous than

valuable." In this category must perhaps be included English, French, and German students of the subject. Among the more important of these occur the treatise 'De re Naval,' published by Lazari Bayfi, Basle, 1537; Scheffer, 'De Militia Naval,' Upsala, 1654; Berghaus, 'Geschichte der Schiff-fahartskunde,' etc.; Benedict, 'Gesch. der Schiff-fahrt und des Handels der Alten'; A. Jal, 'Archeologie Navale,' Paris, 1840; A. Cartault,* 'La Trière Athénienne,' Paris, 1881; Bockh, 'Urkunden über das Seewesen des Attischen Staates,' Berlin, 1840. Later, his disciple, B. Graser, in 'De re Naval,' etc., is admitted in a graceful allusion by M. Cartault to have added much practical knowledge to theory; sufficient, indeed, to make calculations on questions of size, tonnage, masts, rigging, and appointments: "Ainsi, l'originalité de son travail consista à completer, par des hypothèses aussi vraisemblables que possibles, les renseignements que nous donnent les documents." Among those contributors to the subject who speak our own language are Howell on the 'War Galleys of the Ancients,' Mr. Cecil Torr in his excellent book 'Ancient Ships,' Cambridge, 1894; "Triremes," an article contributed by Mr. Arthur Bernard Cook to the 'Mid-Tyne Link,' vol. ii, No. 6, 1903. Also Mr. W. Tarn in the 'Journal of Hellenic Studies,' 1905, xxv, 150-156, and one or two contributions of my own on debateable points ("The Quincunx," etc.) to the 'Classical Review,'

* The distinguished member of the French School at Athens says, in reference to Graser, "to whose researchful work I am especially indebted."

vol. xx, No. 2. The article "Navis," written by Dr. Warre, in 'Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Latin Antiquities,' vol. ii (third edition), sums up fairly, however, and epitomises most of the information we have on ancient shipping.*

In addition to the several treatises and lucubrations here mentioned, we must not forget the efforts in actual construction made by the more enthusiastic or financially capable for demonstrating their respective views by more or less elaborate models, even *pro tempore* converting their back gardens into ship-building yards when a dock was not available. Dr. Warre, I believe, adhering strictly to classical authority in arrangement of rowers, and even to length of oar, in his construction of portion of the side of a Greek trireme, demonstrated the practicability of such an arrangement, at least on dry land. The Emperor Napoleon III, whose sympathy with classical, and especially Roman, traditions is known, not only reconstructed, as it will be remembered, catapults and other engines of war used in past time, but was ambitious of reproducing an ancient Roman war ship of considerable size. It was M. Dupuy de Lôme who built this ship at the imperial request. I fail to remember details at this distance of time, but, however, such a vessel was built. I recall having seen in the Louvre, years ago, a model of an ancient vessel which I should judge was as incorrect as it was unsuccessful in demonstrating practical means of propulsion. The upper tier of oars, comparable by their great length to the

* To M. Cartault, Dr. Warre, and Mr. Cecil Torr I desire to acknowledge my great indebtedness.

sweeps of a Thames barge, were proposed to be worked, as the model indicated, by men who, to avoid the heads of other rowers, held the ends of the sweeps above their own, and were to effect this in a standing position in series in the centre of an upper deck. The model only indicates the vagaries of zealous efforts in the solution of an extreme aspect of the problem. Mr. Cook, to whose illustrated article in the 'Mid-Tyne Link' I have previously alluded, restricts himself commendably to the question of the trireme, but discards the ordinarily accepted view that the rowers sat at the side of the ship at ports either arranged in *quincunx*, or one above another; he accepts boldly instead a plan of Rear-Admiral Fincati, of the Italian Navy, who published a book, 'Le Triremi,' Rome, 1881, showing from documents in the archives of Genoa and Venice that mediaeval galleys called "*triremi*" were from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century very commonly equipped *a zenzile*, that is, with a system of grouped oars, three oars and three oarsmen being assigned to each bench. Now, although hinting at some misgivings in regard to classical authorities, Mr. Cook concludes his article in these words:

"I believe, therefore, that the Trireme problem was in effect half solved by Rear-Admiral Fincati, who first established the analogy of the Venetian Trireme *a zenzile*, and half solved, too, by Dr. Bauer, who rightly insisted that the three banks of a trireme must be but a very slight distance apart (certainly less than two vertical feet). It will only be completely solved when an adequate and indisputable representation of an ancient trireme is dis-

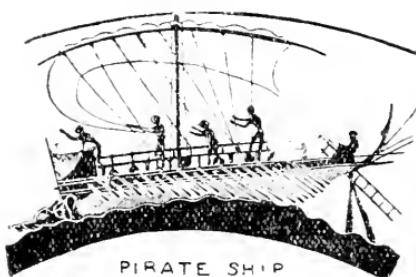
covered. In default of that much to be desired solution, it seems to be worth while to attempt a reconstruction along the lines here laid down."

It should be mentioned that Mr. Cook had deprecated as "debateable" a Greek sculptural relief, which, after all, seems a very authentic document. Under Mr. Cook's direction a model of a section of a trireme was built at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, by a firm of shipbuilders who faithfully, and with some enthusiasm, carried out his plans; illustrations of this are shown in the journal alluded to, and plainly show that instead of a trireme a monoreme was created, the rowers each working one oar over a low gunwale, but seated a little behind and a little above one another, a compromise which appears as ineffectual as it is difficult to understand. It serves one purpose, however, as it manifests clearly a great stumbling-block to the due appreciation of our problem. It demonstrates the difficulty the modern has of dissociating his mind from his preconceived ideas of rowing, his rooted conception, in fact, that when you speak of a vessel propelled by oars, those oars must be at a very slight angle with the water. If an old "Blue," he is once more in his college boat, feathering the Cam or the Isis, and if he recognises that an ancient ship was something larger than his ship, he is assisted by the vision of a barge with its sweeps, only at a similarly relative angle. The thought of the sixteenth century galley only serves to emphasise this idea, because it is known beyond question that the sweeps of a galley lay upon the water over a gunwale at a very

moderate height above it. Experiments of a like character to that on the Tyne-side, alluded to, only tend to increase the difficulty of the question of propulsion of ancient ships by confusing the *mise en scène* of Salamis or Actium with that of Lepanto—and for all question of solution the result is not worth the effort, as the matter remains exactly where it was. As an alternative to the foregoing fruitless mechanical zeal on such independent lines it may be deemed worth while to go back, and, so to speak, sit at the feet of recognised authority, and *de novo* to endeavour to extract from written or other documents the truth at present unrevealed. To do this with any hope of success we must indeed go back to very early times, long, in fact, before triremes were thought of. Some of the earliest ships we know of are those in the Red Sea Fleet of an Egyptian Queen, supposedly 1700 B.C.; some of these vessels showing apertures as for two tiers of oars were necessarily Biremes. We need not go into the question here as to whether the Egyptians invented the bireme or that they derived it from the Phoenicians, who Herodotus tells us came from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. Certainly no indication of bireme construction appears in the oldest representation of a naval battle, *i. e.* that of Rameses III at Medinet Habou, but it is immaterial to our purpose; it is sufficient to know that Phoenician biremes were in the Mediterranean, and though we know little enough about them, they were probably the pirate ships that Thucydides deplores as being the curse of the waters around Greece. These, unlike the ships of

commerce, did not depend upon their sails, but are propelled by oarsmen. Great speed was desired, as they were in all cases provided with a ram (in the form in some instances of an animal's head); they are, frankly, warships. Depicted on the vases, 600–700 B.C., and also on the coins, they indicate very clearly the nature of the navies in the eastern waters of the Mediterranean in early times, and before the introduction of the trireme. Ships were decked, at least fore and aft, like the black ships of

FIG. 1.



Homer; the ram constituted their principal weapon of attack; the ends of the vessels generally towered up higher than the waist, the stern being frequently canopied ornamentally and afforded shelter to the steersmen and other officers. A vessel similar in type to these biremes is shown on an Assyrian carved slab from Koyunjik and cannot be later than 700 B.C. Now, it must be noted that these early ships had a gangway down the centre, for it will be remembered that Ulysses when passing Scylla went armed from stem to stern; Jason is said, moreover, to have handed Medea through his ship. There is no evidence that I have traced to show that these ships were double-banked, as in the arrangement of

an Italian galley; on the contrary, the principle of one man to an oar seems always in early times to have been observed. Dr. Warre is of the opinion that the narrowness of the vessels accounts for this.

The natural evolution of the trireme from these more ancient ships is easy to understand when weight and power are considered as essential to the efficacy of the ram, for ages the principal weapon of marine warfare; the more men who used the oars, the greater the force of the impact upon the enemy, and the greater the destruction wrought.

FIG. 2.



GEASER'S ARRANGEMENT OF ROWERS.

The first trireme is said to have been built in Corinth by Amiocles, a Samian, but whether there or in Phoenicia it was speedily adopted by the Athenians, who maintained a fleet in being by constant and continuous construction, and it is stated that they were able, from similarity in size, to interchange parts at will, a manifest advantage in effecting repairs.

The discovery in 1834 (during some excavations in the Piraeus) of the inventories of the Athenian dockyards has afforded information on many details of construction, but it is much to be regretted that the results were so fragmentary, the engraved slates having been used in late Roman times in the making

of a drain.* As I have already stated, we are indebted to B. Graser, a disciple of Bockh, in his

FIG. 3.

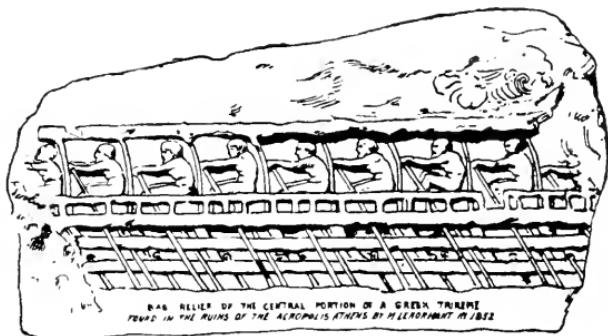
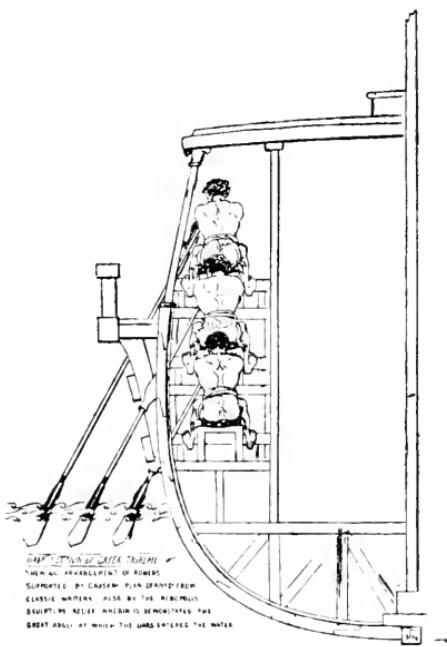


FIG. 4.



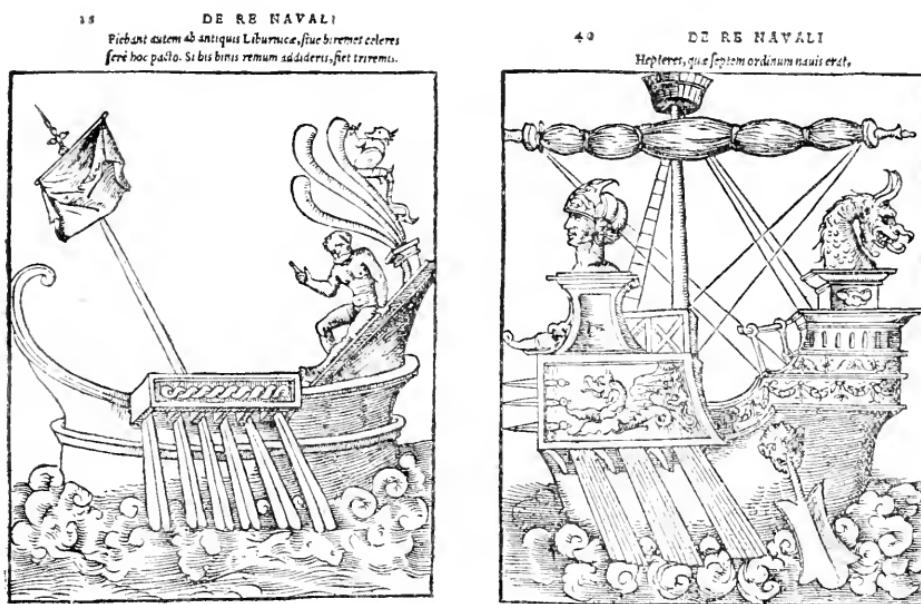
work, 'De re Navali,' for calculations as to size,

* Enough remained, however, for the sagacious and erudite Bockh to elucidate many and unexpected details relative to parts and construction of the Greek ships.

tonnage, and arrangement of the Attic trireme, but ‘*De re Navali*’ was completed just at the time we were to learn from a work of Art more than Graser could derive for us from the texts. M. Lenormant, afterwards Curator of Classical Antiquities in the Louvre, discovered a sculptured representation of a trireme in the Acropolis at Athens. True, it is only the central portion—the ends are wanting—but there is enough to give us the best idea we yet have of the ancient ships that at Salamis, the Peloponnesian War, and at Syracuse were fated to play such an important part in Hellenic history. I will leave to others the fascinating task of connecting this piece of sculpture in some way with the chrys elephantine model presented to the Delphic Oracle, size would seem to favour the comparison, but I must not digress. M. Lenormant, I believe, deposited a cast of the trireme of the Aeropolis in the École de Beaux Arts, Paris. Our late President, Sir Patrick Colquhoun, brought three to England; one I have seen at the Greenwich Museum, one he presented to the British Museum, and one he retained himself, and we have talked over it in his chambers in the Temple years ago. If one examines this fragment of sculpture or a photograph carefully, an observer will see that the rowers visible above the gallery or *parados* do not sit far in board, but close to the side. This should once for all dispose of the idea that the upper banks of oars were rowed from positions in or near the centre of the ship, so to obtain greater leverage. It will also be observed that the upper row, or *thranite* oars, do not lie over a gunwale; but, on the contrary,

pass through or behind the parados or gallery, an essential matter if, as has been stated, the parados was an outside fighting platform. We must note also that the platform or parados itself, projecting obviously—by the cast shadow—from the side of the ship, confirms emphatically a conspicuous feature in

FIG. 5.



numerous works of art usually looked upon with suspicion of so-called artistic licence. The exiguous coin not alone, Montfaucon and Wincklemann are both absolved, while several engravings in the 'De re Navali' of Lazari Bayfii, 1537, are fully substantiated. The Lenormant cast is, by the traces of rich ornamentation, representative of a rather late period, possibly of the time of Alcibiades, and is of the description known as aphract, in distinction to cataphract, in which the thranite rowers were

covered, and not exposed, as in the aphract, to the attacks of an enemy. It will be seen that the supports of the gallery or parados are in the photograph frequent and substantial. These also lend their support to the horizontal bands or wales which lie along the side of the ship, and being connected with the ram distributed the shock with less danger to the structure. To strengthen the entire fabric, however, it was found necessary to reinforce these wales by encircling the ship with closely tied ropes, which shrank and tightened when they were wet. The ram itself, below the ornamented prow, of which there are extant examples, appeared above the water, and was probably fairly represented in the Trajan column sculpture as divided into three points.

In later times, however, the armed beak was entirely submerged.* Although the Greek trireme carried a mast or masts and sails, according to Graser, it is probable that one of these was in the nature of a bowsprit. In all cases, I believe, these were removed on going into action, and the vessel was manoeuvred by the oars alone ; passing through the enemy's line, hurling projectiles from the upper or fighting deck, or in the case of the Romans from temporary but high turrets. There seems to be no reason for fixing definitely the number of the crew or fighting men on a trireme or other ships. Accounts differ, and I think we may safely infer circumstances and amount of accommodation would

* The ram as a means of attack lasted for a long period, but was superseded by the Romans in their preference to boarding the enemy to running him down. They came to close quarters and let fall platforms or bridges which gripped the enemy vessel with a spike.

rule. Suffice that the number of rowers in the upper or thranite bank of a trireme seems to have been 62; the zygites, who sat immediately below these, numbered 58; and the thalamites, who were the lowest bank, were 54; *i.e.*, half these numbers on each side.* M. Cartault, correcting Graser as to measurement, agrees with him as to the seating of the rowers. The correction is as to the distance apart on each bank, Cartault taking the statement of Vitruvius that the rowers sat on their stools three feet apart. Great economy of space was customary in the arrangement of the rowers. The heads of the zygite rowers must have risen above the level of the feet of the thranites, and the heads of the thalamites similarly to the same level between the zygites.†

It has been shown that each man carried his oar and a cushion to place on his seat, and also proof is afforded that there was a scale of payment agreeably to the respective labour of thranite, zygite, and thalamite. The thalamite having the shortest oar, and having consequently less laborious work, received the smallest pay.‡

* Surplus oars were occasionally used by the *Epibatae* or others on board in emergencies.

† The side lights of comedy give us illumination and tend to prove, not only as with ourselves, public interest in the navy, but details which confirm the statements of other authorities. There are texts of Aristophanes which bear out by popular allusion some of the discomforts of the rowers so tightly packed in the *coulvirs*, in which they sat, that one can well believe there was not room, as has been said, on a fully manned and equipped warship for one man more.

‡ M. Cartault warns us against confounding the *forcats* or galley-slaves of the Middle Ages with the crews of the Greek ships which were rowed by citizens or free mercenaries. Citizens of high rank do not appear to have been exempt.

I have no doubt that the thranite oar was in length approximately fourteen feet three inches (according to Mr. Cecil Torr); this would be sufficient length, if we accept Graser's dictum that the trireme stood eleven feet above the line of flotation, and, moreover, if it be allowed, as I have pointed out, that the trireme of the Acropolis shows the oars coming from under the parados, and not over it. Another feature in this cast—if I interpret it correctly, and I have examined both it and the photograph too frequently not to observe its striking significance—is that the zygite oars pass under, and not over, the band or wale affixed to the brackets or supports of the parados. The importance of these oars being within the wale is apparent, in that it obviates all risk of the zygite oars clashing with those of the upper ordine, the thranites. It would seem that the thalamite oars similarly lay under the lowest wale, but allowing for the shape of the ports through which they pass confusion would be avoided. The thalamite oar ports could not have had a horizontal axis, but must have been depressed so as to afford the thalamite the opportunity of a more or less vertical stroke.*

The stroke of the oarsmen in those ancient navies is a matter of greater consideration, in my own view, than it has received.

Having once cleared our minds of the boating idea or that of the mediaeval galley where the oars lie upon a low gunwale, it becomes a question

* It should be remembered that the ports were protected from the influx of the sea by leather screens or bags through which the oars passed.

in relation to length at what angle the ancient oarsmen took the water; the more vertical the stroke the shorter necessarily must be the oar; the angle would determine the length. We may agree that the Greek trireme could be pulled in the ordinary way, more or less, as represented—always assuming that the thranites are seated with their backs to the bow, of which the fragment of sculpture affords no absolute proof.* We may agree that this method of rowing, as shown in the trireme, applied to antecedent ships, and also to the Liburnian bireme down to Roman times, but when the size of the vessel is increased beyond a quadrireme or quinquireme, unless we allow some other method of rating, of which we know nothing, the necessarily longer oar becomes unmanageable in a seaway. Mr. Marks puts the matter very concisely when he says in a note to his paper, March, 1900 :

“We may try to escape from the difficulty by supposing some different method of rating for galleys with a higher number of banks than, say, five. But we at once encounter another difficulty. The maximum of freeboard for a one-man oar, six feet, must, for all we can see, have been required for the quinquireme. But the higher rated galleys were certainly larger than the quinquiremes, the sixteen-banked galley was of “almost unmanageable bulk.” In what

* I may mention here that the same uncertainty as to direction in which the vessel is proceeding is apparent on the coins. There is one indeed of about A.D. 200 where the rowers are evidently backing water hard, or adopting some method akin to paddling. On examination of the Aeropolis relief one's attention is called to the depressed hands of the rowers. My friend Mr. Paley Baildon, F.S.A., is of opinion that these indicate the use of a lever or crutch such as is found in various forms of paddle, a lever which would certainly be of service in turning the oar to regain after stroke.

respect were these galleys larger, if we may not increase their freeboard? And where are we to place their banks in excess of five?"

He goes on to say the difficulty is increased in the case of the sixteen banked galley:

"We may take it that, as ten feet of freeboard represent ten banks, sixteen feet will be needed for the sixteen banks (see Torr, p. 21). An oar fifty feet long might perhaps be pulled from this height by six men, as in the French galley. But here we are brought up by the fact that there is no trace of a suggestion that oars in the ancient galleys were ever pulled by more than one man to each oar. In this all-round strain, in this conflict of impossibilities and inadmissibilities, something has got to give way. But what? Which is the line of least resistance?

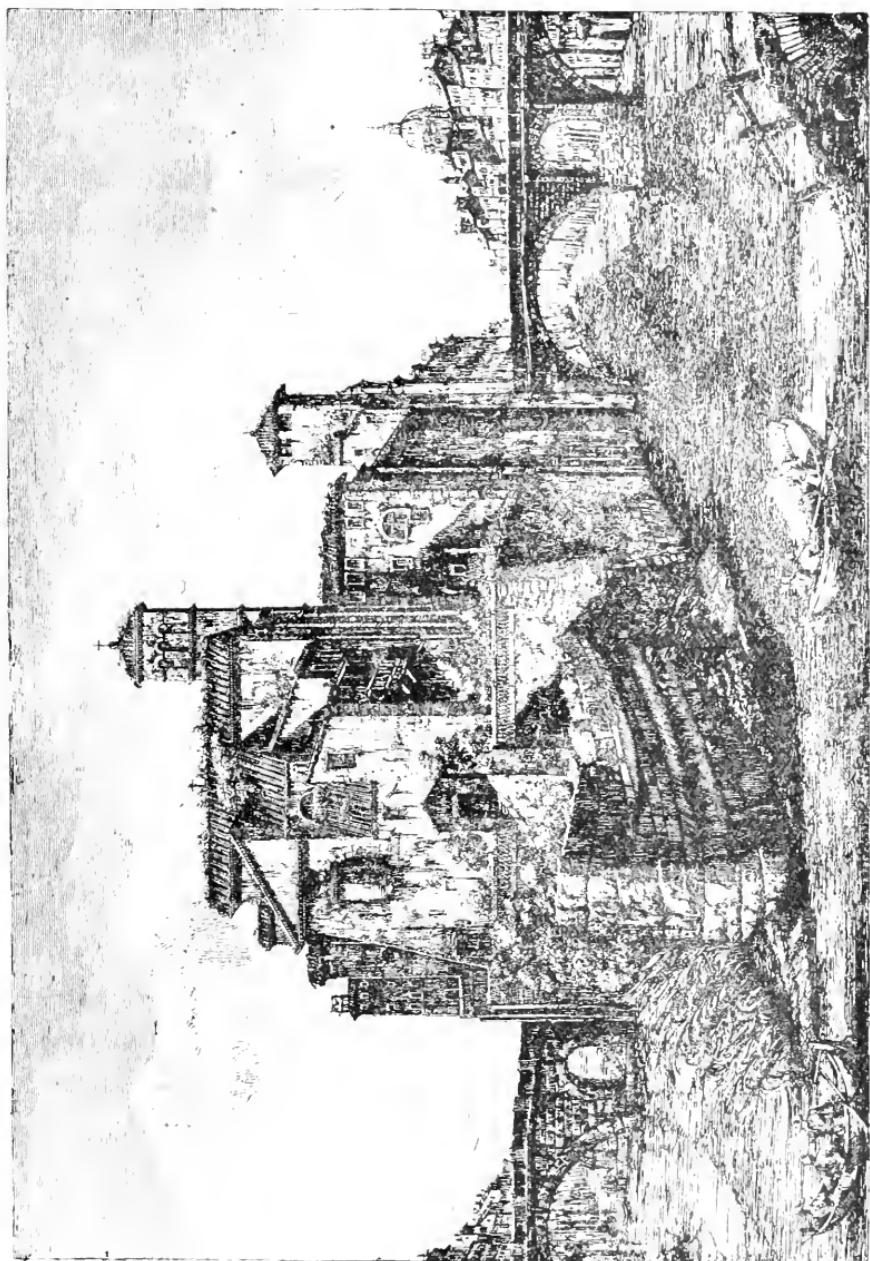
"Let us look over the main points:

"(1) There can be no doubt as to size; the sixteen-banked galley was 'of almost unmanageable bulk.'

"(2) This large galley which Mr. Torr, not without reason, conjectures to have had a freeboard of sixteen feet, was propelled by one-man oars. This is as little open to discussion.

"(3) Therefore we must look for the solution in the method of handling the oars."

Thus far Mr. Marks, but what was the method of handling the oars? I have said with a much more vertical stroke than we have been used to suppose, a stroke in fact in these large vessels which is comparable rather with that of a levered paddle than of an oar. The 'De re Navali' of Lazari Bayfii indicates in illustrations some traditions of such a mode of propulsion even to rowers facing the bow. The

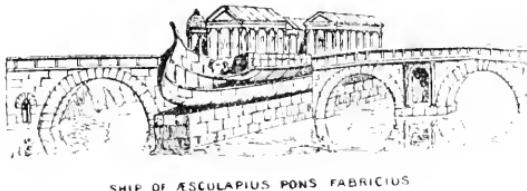


REMAINS OF THE STONE SHIP ON ISLAND, 1820.

(From Rossini's *Encyclopædia*.)

trireme of the Acropolis, as I have shown, depresses the zygite and thalamite oars. This system, if necessary for the trireme, must have applied with greater necessity to larger ships. We have spoken of not alone sixteen banks, but of forty ; there must have been some special arrangement and rating in these cases. I suggest, is it to be found in some enlargement of the outside gallery or parados ? This cannot in all cases have been no wider than six inches as allowed by Graser. In the trireme it

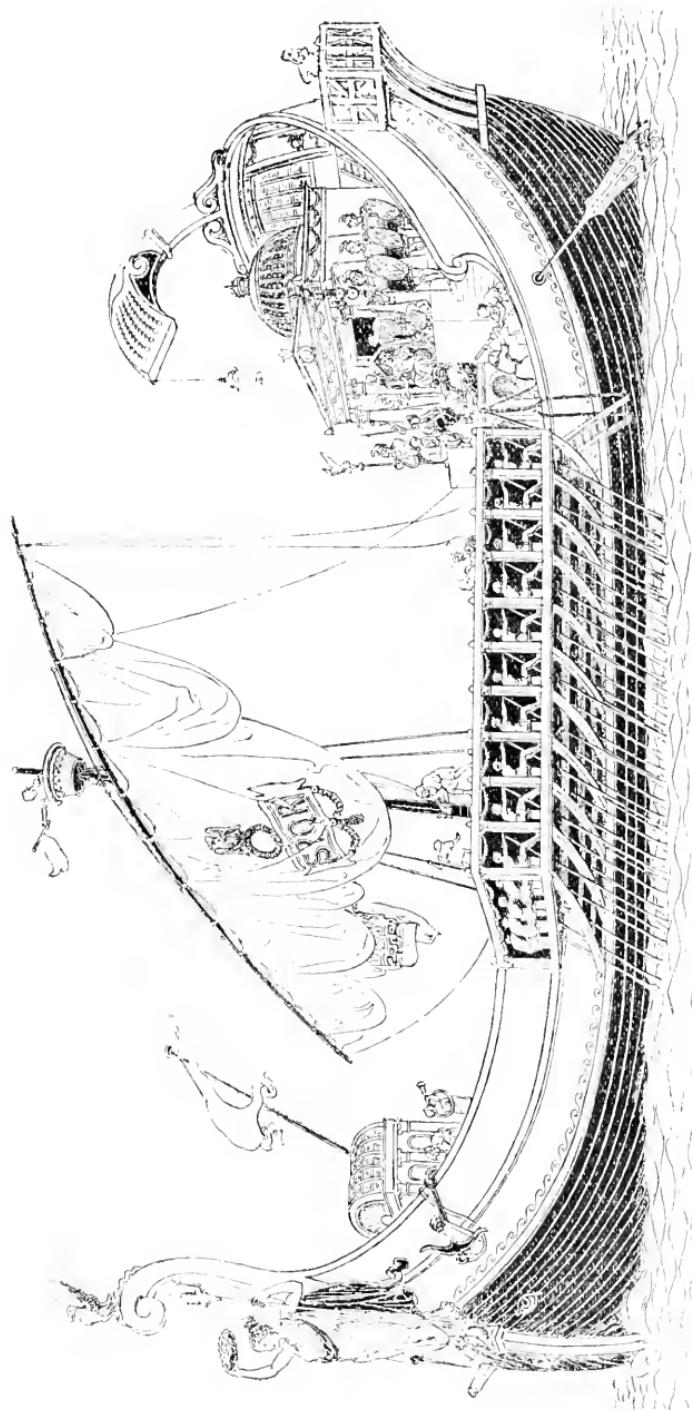
FIG. 7.



must have been wider than that, which would have only represented an enlarged gunwale. In larger vessels it must have been wide enough to allow of the passage of groups of oars through its flooring or cantilevers.

This is actually shown in the illustrations to the ‘ De re Naval i ’ of Lazari Bayfii, and seems to me to be much more probably based on tradition than a mere invention. If such an arrangement be recognised as feasible, even thirty or forty banks of rowers become possible, but it must be allowed that the rating is no longer longitudinal, but transverse. If it be argued that there is no illustrative evidence of the possibility of the rowing of such large ships, one must ask with renewed interest, what is the

FIG. 8.



CONJECTURAL DESIGN OF AN IMPERIAL ROMAN GALLEY OF TEN BANKS—PLEASURE OR HOUSE-BOAT WITH WIDE PARADOS AND VERTICAL OARS.

p. H. Norman, inc., and atl.

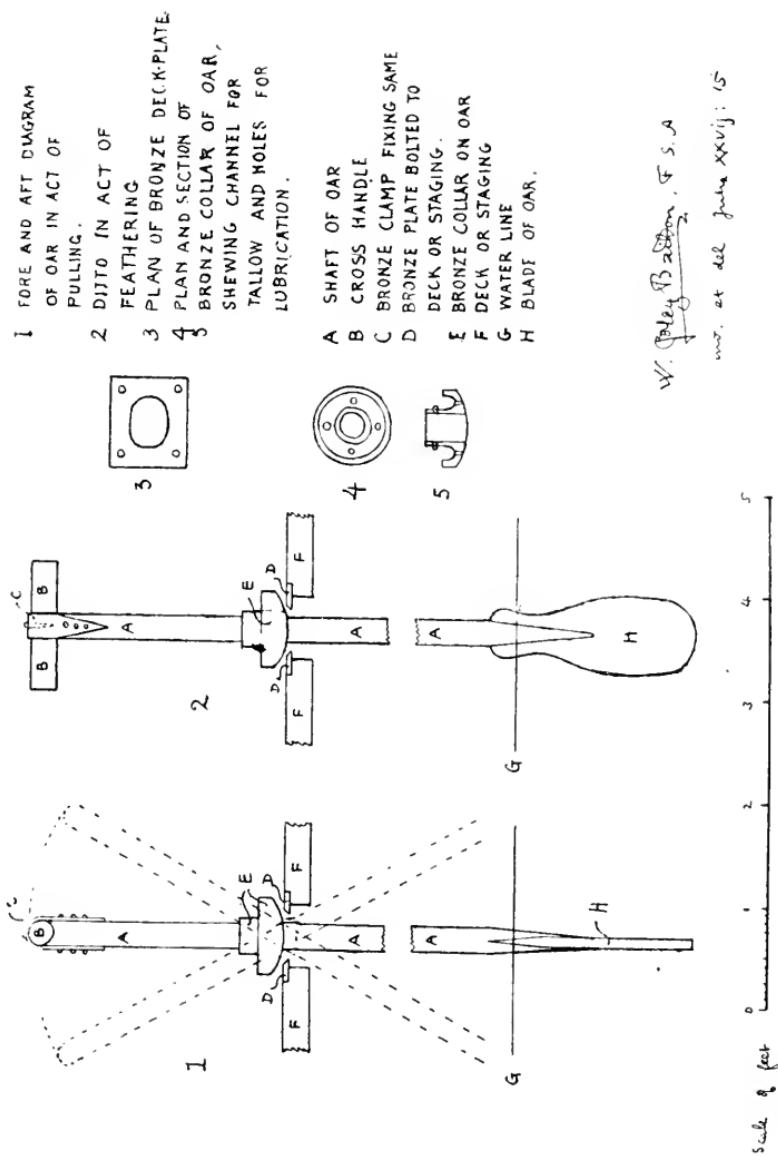
meaning of that monumental ship of stone* that was on the island of the Tiber reached by the “Ponte quattro capi,” formerly the Pons Fabricius, and the Pons Cestius of republican times? In this vessel (serving as a buttress of a bridge) the projecting gallery from the ship, as shown in an engraving, is capable of supporting a host of men who could work oars vertically dropped through the spaces of the cantilevers and at no great height from the water.

But whether the stone ship carried a projection of this width or not its occurrence in an illustration points to some derivative; the substratum of truth is confirmed by other illustrations. A gallery or parados is visible on coins as well as in the Basle book of Bayfii. Jal says, in his ‘Archéologie Navale,’ that he does not believe in the great Egyptian galley of Philopater as described by Calixenes or Athenaeus. Indeed, he does not seem to admit as practicable any vessel with more than two ordines of rowers; but then it must be remembered that the sculptured fragment of the Aeropolis he had not seen. It was not discovered till 1852. Jal’s book was published in 1840, in which he says: “Je crois fermement que jus’que jour ou un Helleniste habile aura par une étude speciale fixé, dois je dire deviné? Les sens des mots de la langue maritimes Grecques et Roman restera in-

* Query: Was this stone ship on the island erected in commemoration of that vessel of sixteen banks expressly mentioned in the treaty of the Romans with the Macedonians, 197 b.c.? Her arrival in the Tiber was—as Mr. Torr reminds us—“a memorable event, she afterwards gave her name to one of the docks in Rome.” The treaty is cited by Polybius, xviii. 27. Plutarch describes the ship’s arrival.

Fig. 9.

DESIGNED TO SHEW POSSIBILITY OF PROPULSION BY VERTICAL OARS



soluble." I share Jal's doubts about anything above the trireme, though I see no difficulty in obtaining the quinquiremes, the ten-banked vessel in which Antony fled from Aetium, or even the larger ships if it be allowed that the parados be made full use of, and that it was made use of largely I think we can have little doubt, unless we are prepared to consider the far greater improbabiltiy of the illustrations in the Basle book being inventions, and not based on traditions which had been handed down to the Renaissance.*

I refer again here to the paper given to the Society by Mr. Marks, March 28th, 1900. Relating to the discussion which followed the reading, Mr. Marks says :

Mr. Philip H. Newman, a Fellow of the Society, suggested that oars were used vertically on the large galleys, etc. The suggestion was quite new to me, and so far as I can find has not been made previously. It is chiefly owing to it that this note has been written. It is conceivable that a vessel with a freeboard of sixteen feet could be propelled

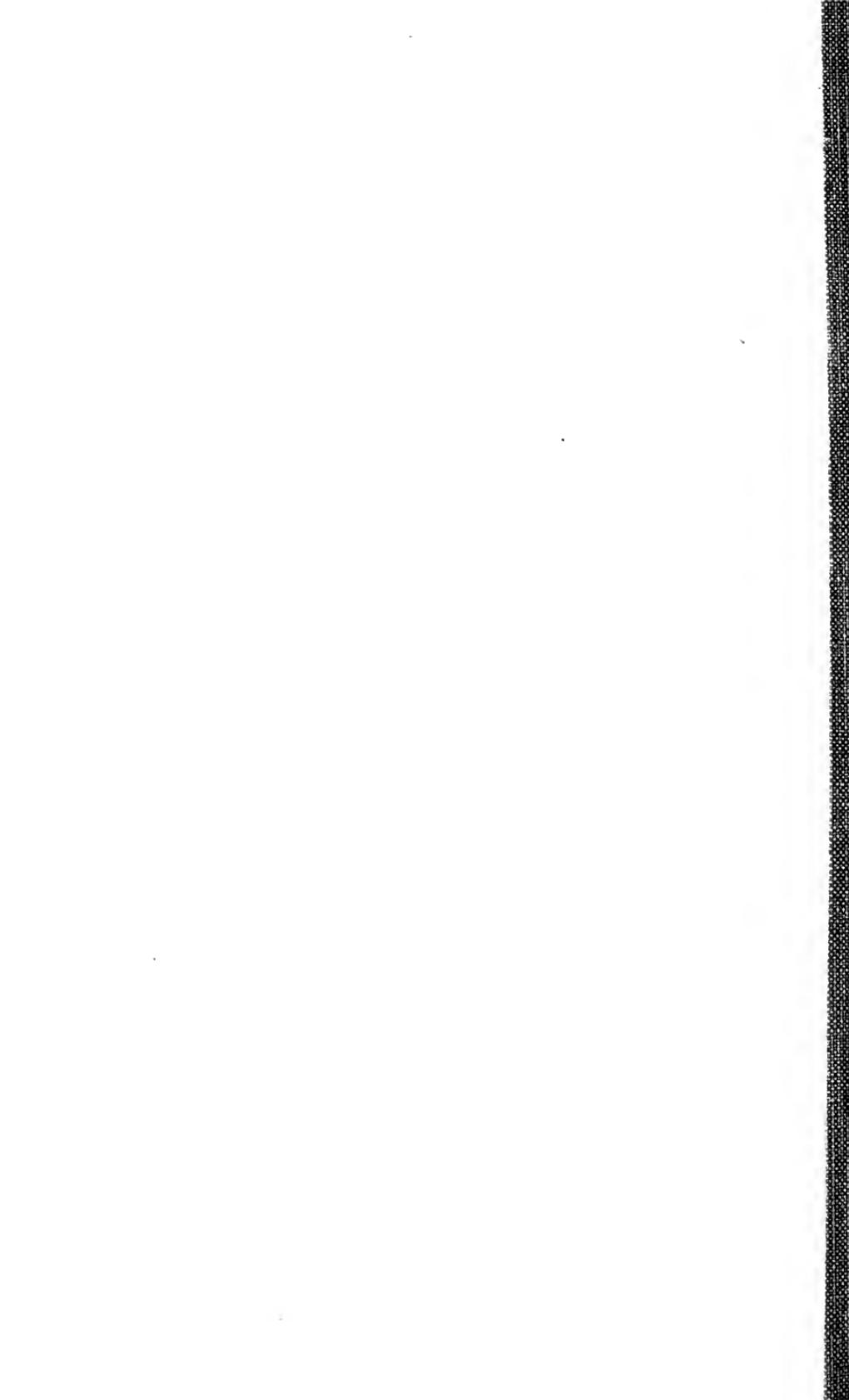
* While getting this paper ready for press I was fortunate in finding, through the kindness of Mr. W. Paley Baildon, the derivative and authority for the cut giving a conjectural restoration of the pons Fabricius and the temple and ship of Aesculapius. An engraving of 1820 shows the island in the Tiber and the buildings upon it at that date. The prow of the ship had gone, the deck had been added to by some of the heavy stones of the fore part, but the parados and head of Aesculapius remained, the parados being really much wider than I had supposed and certainly wide enough for the purpose I suggest, viz., either paddling or using some method of rowing at a great angle with the water.

I have designed the ten-banked Roman ship with the object of illustrating the use of the wide parados for rowing; if used for paddling, of course, the figures would be reversed and face the prow. I am indebted to my friend Mr. W. Paley Baildon, F.S.A., for the drawing showing the practicability of propulsion with vertical oars.

by one-man oars used vertically, the oars being of a greater length than could be used obliquely. It does not seem possible that such a vessel could be propelled by one-man oars in any other way. It would therefore appear that in Mr. Newman's suggestion we have at least an indication of the direction in which a solution of this difficult problem is to be sought. It tends to a possible solution, which in my judgment is more than can be said of any other hypothesis put forward. I think we may go further and say that it seems to offer a solution not merely possible, but probable."

When these observations were made I gave some additional attention to the subject from time to time, but always with the hope and expectation that some one with more leisure and learning than myself might follow up the suggestions Mr. Marks so liberally commented upon; but no fresh discoveries nor any further light of any kind has been shed upon the subject. Time goes on, and I deemed that I ought at least to contribute a paper to the Royal Society of Literature, if acceptable, if only to sum up as far as might be not only my own humble views and convictions, but to put on record the effort and interest the Society has taken in the problem.

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